

AN APPRAISAL OF THE CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF SHELLEY'S
POETRY.

by

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To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Axel Kuise.

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S U M M A R Y.

The contemporary attitude to Shelley may be considered as a combination of two sharply opposed points of view: a tradition of disapproval and a tradition of extravagant admiration.

Disapproval of Shelley has been greatly influenced by the early criticism of T.S. Eliot. The claim is that Shelley is a heretic whose work suffers from emotionalism and incoherence. F.R. Leavis adds to this tradition the argument that faults in Shelley's style reflect faults in character and morality. He argues that Shelley is an unimportant Romantic poet.

Shelley is intensely emotional, his theories are not profound, and his style suffers from obscurity and unstable rhetorical devices.

However, in the early poems, despite his immaturity, he experiments with radical versions of Romantic forms. Alastor is an attempt to create elaborate allegorical ambiguity. Mont Blanc is a radical version of the Romantic nature poem. In particular, Shelley is concerned with mimesis, even mimetic obscurity. These variations upon traditional methods are linked with elaborate, if inconclusive, philosophising about mysticism, magic, monism and scepticism. His attitude to visionary inspiration is often governed by a dilemma, conflicting ideas about idealism and illusion.

F.R. Leavis, William Empson, and even Yvor Winters, tend to be influenced by the mimetic fallacy in their attitude to Shelley.

Shelley was confused about the nature of poetry. But the demand for precision in poetry should not obscure his perverse complexity and the brilliance of his immaturity.

The tradition of admiration may be referred to Yeats: the tendency is to praise Shelley as a Platonist (or magician, or apocalyptic visionary). The second tradition offers a more obvious and extreme version of the mimetic fallacy. It misunderstands Shelley's complex attitude to inspiration and obscures the qualifications he adds to his celebration of ecstasy. Both Platonism and myth are important in the poems. However, Shelley's sense of dilemma is greater in Prometheus Unbound, although his tentative and intense religious idealism is also more clear. His symbolism is neither primitive nor concerned merely with visionary apocalypse.

The Freudian and Jungian criticism of the 1930's finds apocalypse (or apocalyptic Platonism) and myth. Herbert Read claims that homosexuality is the main meaning of the poems; in contrast, on the whole, the subject is linked with contrived implications about monism and Love. The other critics confuse Shelley's tentative speculations and their own extravagant theories.

Two American critics of the 1930's, Carl Grabo and Benjamin Kurtz, show clearer understanding of Shelley's equivocal attitude to reform and Platonism. However, they obscure his uncertainty about inspiration.

Prometheus Unbound combines propaganda about Romantic

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idealism, analysis of despair, and a Dionysian version of a tragic dilemma. Contemporary American criticism contains profound interpretation of one level of Shelley's attitude to vision. But it tends to continue the claim that Shelley was an inspired prophet. The result is confusion about the methods and content of Prometheus Unbound, and false praise.

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CHAPTER I.PART I.

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The obvious starting point for an appraisal of the contemporary view of Shelley is the attitude of distrust and dislike which T.S. Eliot explained in the 1920's and 1930's. Eliot's attitude has become the orthodox one in most of the criticism written in England, although it has not been as important in America. The critics who accept it disagree about points of general theory and the emphasis which should be placed upon particular characteristics of Shelley's poetry. Even between the earlier critics, Eliot, F.R. Leavis and William Empson, there are important differences of opinion. Nevertheless the general attitude and much of the emphasis in interpretation tend to remain the same. Even critics who in recent years have rejected Eliot's general theories about poetry seem disinclined to change the general attitude to Shelley. Graham Hough has helped to define and develop the recent dissatisfaction with Eliot's general theories.⁽¹⁾ He also believes that Shelley was the solitary intellectual among the early Romantic poets. But his general attitude to Shelley is the same as Eliot's: he believes that the poetry is "a strange gaseous force", the result of uncontrolled subjectivity and emotionalism.⁽²⁾

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Eliot's most important comments about Shelley appear in

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism.⁽³⁾ Eliot stresses the continuity and development of ideas in the nineteenth century. He says that for Wordsworth the poet was a prophet who was to teach through pleasure; and he explains Romanticism as a spiritual revival which passed to Newman, Ruskin and Arnold. Thus he prepared the way for the later critics such as Graham Hough and Frank Kermode who have discussed his own poetry and criticism as part of the tradition which was formed in the nineteenth century.⁽⁴⁾ His comments about Shelley are best understood within this context.

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism does not provide a complete general theory of poetry. It shows that Eliot the critic is an "arbiter of taste" rather than a thinker concerned with abstract speculation.⁽⁵⁾ It combines a lively sceptical awareness of the need to examine all sides of any argument and the idea that poetry has mysterious value. (We should keep in mind Eliot's enthusiasm for symbolism and his insistence upon a sceptical and analytical attitude in matters of belief). His main concern is to combine two ideas: firstly, that there is a special (or artistic) intuition; secondly, that the rational content of a poem must be taken into account in evaluation. The comments about Shelley arise as part of a discussion of belief in poetry in relation to Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. The main points are Wordsworth's assumption of religious value for poetry and the relevance of his opinions to his

greatness, that there is a vicious combination of talent, intuitional inspiration and opinion in Shelley's poetry, and that Keats managed an excellent balance of opinion and intuition. As Eliot has no clear answer to the main issue (aesthetic intuition and reason), his discussion of the illustration (the differences between Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats) is confused and inconclusive.

Eliot begins the essay on Shelley by contrasting Shelley with Wordsworth. He refers to the earlier argument that, although his Romantic desire to be a prophet was unsatisfactory, Wordsworth holds a significant place in the history of modern thought and we cannot separate his poetic greatness from his opinions as a poet. He says that in contrast, despite talent and inspiration, Shelley is not a great poet because his ideas are trivial: in fact, he says that Shelley's ideas "are of adolescence, and enthusiasm for them is adolescent." (6) The phrasing is important: it is abusive as well as evaluative and sets the tone for many of Eliot's followers. Nevertheless, Eliot does allow that Shelley has talent and inspiration. He tends to argue that Shelley is a great poet who is not a great poet: "I find his ideas repellant; and the difficulty of separating Shelley from his ideas and beliefs is still greater than with Wordsworth." (7) He alternately allows that the poems have aesthetic value and debunks their poetic content. For the most part he allows Shelley the "verbal, rhythmic and imaginative" gifts of a poet. He says that Shelley's

"poetic gifts matured", although his ideas remained "pretty fixed"⁽⁸⁾; and Shelley's poetic gifts "were certainly of the first order."⁽⁹⁾ Within the essay, the phrase "poetic gifts" covers many things, from a special kind of intuition, to a special kind of verbal talent. When Eliot refers to Shelley's imagery his praise is vague and equivocal. For example, he quotes lines 121-123 from Epipsychidion in order to praise an image; but he also says that real "precision of image" and economy were only achieved in The Triumph of Life. The image from Epipsychidion serves a rational as well as a sensuous and emotional purpose. But Eliot merely says that it is a "lovely image." We might assume that he means it is a sensuous invention which evokes emotional and rational meanings. On the other hand, the phrase "lovely image" suggests qualified admiration, it suggests the exquisite, and something less sharp and vigorous than wit; and the qualification is connected with an area of uncertainty in Eliot's criticism.

By the end of the essay "Shelley and Keats", Eliot has divided poets into three main groups. The first group is suggested by Dante and Lucretius, the second by Wordsworth, Shelley and Goethe, the third by Shakespeare and Keats. The first group are poets with explicit philosophies; the second, poets with disabling philosophies which are irresponsible reactions to poetic inspiration; the third, poets without philosophies who nevertheless are wise because they explore the poetic (we might say, the essence of inspiration) without the

distortion caused by a false philosophy. The categories are not organized well. It seems clear that Shelley is allowed a poetic gift which covers more than words, senses, feelings and ideas. Eliot says that the first and third categories are quite different from the second:

"A poet may borrow a philosophy or he may do without one. It is when he philosophises upon his own poetic insight that he is apt to go wrong." (10)

He talks of a special poetic insight (beyond sensibility and verbal skill) although he has warned us that there is not "just some one essence of poetry." (11) (His discussion of Keats develops this equivocation). Thus his argument suggests we should believe that by nature Shelley had a potential for poetic wisdom (beyond systematic philosophy); and that as a member of the second group Shelley forfeited the highest kind of poetry. For Eliot the second group is the curse of bad modern poetry: these poets "belong with the number of the great heretics of all times." (12) He believes that Romanticism was concerned with a false relationship between poetry and religion. I do not disagree with Eliot's general attitude to Romanticism; but his arguments and particular interpretations are unsatisfactory. It is important that, when he allows Shelley the status of a "great heretic", he means that Shelley had at least the potential to be a great poet. Furthermore, from this point of view, Shelley is linked with the historically significant ideas of his time. It is also relevant that for Eliot the Romantic error could be

explained in part by applying I.A. Richard's idea that, "To distinguish an intuition of an emotion from an intuition by it, is not always easy."⁽¹³⁾ For Eliot, the Romantic tendency to substitute poetry for religion was in part caused by confused emotionalism.

Eliot links Shelley with Wordsworth, but says that Shelley's case is different:

"he borrowed ideas ... but he borrowed shabby ones, and when he had got them he muddled them up with his own intuitions."⁽¹⁴⁾ This is the climax of his argument that immature ideas will destroy appreciation. To support his claim that Shelley's ideas are adolescent, he explains that Shelley was without metaphysical or philosophical clarity, that, for example, he was able to be at the same time both "an eighteenth century rationalist and a cloudy Platonist."⁽¹⁵⁾ He laments that Shelley took his ideas seriously. He complains that in fact, in addition to his philosophic weakness, Shelley was extraordinary in his intensity about his ideas (the implication is that Shelley is a grotesquely exaggerated version of the typical adolescent): "Shelley seems to have had to a high degree the unusual faculty of passionate apprehension of abstract ideas."⁽¹⁶⁾ The later reference to I.A. Richards is relevant: Eliot implies the idea of emotional misplacement, emotionalism increasing intellectual awkwardness. He says that, when we are confounded by the philosophy of Epipsychidion, we must believe Shelley was at times "confused about his own feelings." The comments

upon "jingling" and repetition of catchwords imply that emotionalism can cause failure in all parts of a poem. Thus, although Eliot says that Shelley is different, trivial and unimportant, his argument seems to suggest that Shelley was different from other examples of Romantic failure only because he was an extreme case: it suggests that he made outrageous amalgams of ideas (such as vegetarianism and eighteenth century rationalism) and something related to religious experience, and that he had extremely powerful emotional resources strangely suited to the Romantic tendency to allow emotion to confuse itself and thinking. Although the fact is not obvious, Eliot's theories about Shelley are closely linked with his theories about Romanticism in general. In fact, Eliot manages to distort the nature of Shelley's poetry in order to make it fit his argument. However, although his definition of the characteristics and meaning of Shelley's poetry is wrong, it does seem true that in many ways the poetry is an extreme version of Romanticism.

Eliot's criticism is often centred around a few short and striking comparisons and his comments upon Shelley follow this pattern. He quotes, without detailed explanation, one section from The Triumph of Life, two sections from Prometheus Unbound, and two sections from Epipsychidion. In contrast I shall begin with detailed discussion of a rather long section of Alastor (1815), Shelley's earliest major poem; the other illustrations in the first chapter are also from Shelley's early

work, and linked with the themes and techniques of Alastor.

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It seems best to begin with discussion of Shelley's techniques and imagery, bearing in mind Eliot's comments about the "verbal, rhythmic and imaginative gifts" of the poet, and the "lovely image" in Epipsychidion.

In lines 140 - 222 of Alastor, the Poet of the story reaches the vale of Cashmire and in a vision meets "the spirit of sweet human love" (l 204) in the form of a beautiful woman who vanishes at the climax of his ecstatic desire. The section supports Eliot's complaint that many of Shelley's lines are "harsh and untunable". There is awkward alliteration; this is sometimes mere carelessness (e.g. lines 203-205), but very often seems to have been used with naive enthusiasm (e.g. "in the breath of night,/Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips/ Outstretched and pale" (lines 178-180). There is also awkward repetition of words; and Shelley shows naive delight in ingenuity (e.g. "As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven"). Poetic clichés occur: the diction is often conventional (e.g. "aërial", "vale", "dell"), and Shelley uses well-worn phrases (e.g. "sparkling rivulet", "icy caves") and trite and awkward circumlocation (e.g. "the calm of thought", "bursting burthen", "the breath of night"). Eliot's phrase "poetry so fluent" implies the carelessness and facile superficiality of this kind of bad borrowing of bad conventions. But it is important that Shelley's immature lack of taste

allows misdirected ingenuity. Furthermore, the actual versification shows less evidence of "bad jingling" than the derivative diction (and ideas) might make us expect. The blank verse is formal and rather declamatory, but not monotonous.

Eliot's complaint about lack of precision and economy is obviously relevant. Like the whole poem, the lines tell a story concerning grand and mysterious events and an atmosphere intended to be sublime. In many ways, the lack of economy arises because the structure complements the meaning. There is an obvious and conventional link between the grandeur of the events and the length of the poem and its narrative sections. Furthermore, Shelley relies upon the quantity of his description (rather than clarity and liveliness) to add to the grandeur of the events. In lines 140-145, the vale of Cashmere would have been sufficient to suggest exotic mystery, but we are given also Arabia, Persia, the wild Carmanian waste, the Indus and the Oxus. In lines 146 - 149, the same kind of confusion is clearly ridiculous, as without exception each noun is qualified by a trite adjective. Accumulation of a large number of facts also has a mechanical, monotonous and rather ludicrous effect when Shelley refers to the vale, the dell, the plants, the rocks, the bower, the rivulet, the Poet's limbs. For the same reason, the climax of the dream is rather ludicrous. In lines 165-191, we examine the hands, veins, blood and heart of the maiden, then her heart, breath, limbs, arms, hair, eyes, lips, then the heart, limbs, breath and arms of the Poet. The repetition of observation,

the impression of increasingly intense observation, and the formal orderliness of the observations seem incongruous and awkward, and clash with the mystery and passion of the events. (The passage is within the epic tradition of formal particularity of description, but it is too much like Chaucer's description of Chauntecleer). Shelley follows the same methods in his use of imagery. He uses many images, often uses a number of images to describe a subject, and often returns to a subject to add details. The voice of the maiden is like music, water and wind, it is a web, and the web is something like a rainbow with "shifting hues"; after describing the maiden's song and passion, Shelley returns to her voice "stifled in tremulous sobs"; and her voice is described again in lines 270-272. He also repeats images, in many cases with changes in form and reference; and descriptions also have alternately literal and figurative significance. The maiden is veiled when first mentioned (l.151), then her voice is a web which is like a coloured veil made in part from "streams and breezes" (l.155-157), later the veil she wears is a "sinuous veil/ of woven wind" (l. 176-177). In the same way, her breath is mentioned in line 270 and is linked with the song's veil imagery, then in lines 178-179 the veil of air is her original veil, finally the maiden's hair floats "in the breath of night" like a veil. Thus, there is a lack of precision in our perception of the events as well as lack of economy in the development of the description. Of course, the blurring of outlines in the

description and the merging of details parallels the mystery and mounting excitement of the dream. Eliot's complaint about emotionalism would suggest that the imprecision arises from lack of conscious artifice in Shelley's involvement with ecstasy. In accordance with this, it seems probable that unconscious puns (e.g. air (as the atmosphere), air (as song) and hair) were in part responsible for the imagery describing the maiden's breath; and the puns are grotesque. However, despite some evidence of failure of discipline, there is also an extensively contrived relationship between structure and content: in part Shelley seems to have contrived a special kind of imprecision in order to reflect the essence of a moment of intense emotion. This cannot be established very clearly at present. But there are other more obvious ways in which imprecision and lack of economy are caused by contrivance. The accumulation and repetition of detail is in part a device to increase tension and make the incident an effective narrative climax. This also reveals a combination of immature discipline and concern with ingenious contrivance, in particular with contrivance which uses structure as a reflection of content.

Eliot's demand for precision of imagery probably should also be interpreted as a demand for sensuous immediacy. Of course, the vision deals with intense awareness of the sensuous and sensual; and we find this awareness throughout Shelley's poetry. Furthermore, many of the descriptive details, for example,

"hopes that never yet /Had flushed his cheek" (l.150-151), are vivid and precise statements about sensuous experience; and the sensuous immediacy of the episode is increased by Shelley's awareness of words as sounds (as in the last example).

Shelley's senses are keen: he writes about sound, colour, movement and touch of many kinds. In fact, he is often concerned with extremes of sensuous experience. The details of the vision are effective as descriptions of extreme experience; for example, "parted lips/ Outstretched", "frantic gesture and short breathless cry". Nevertheless, there are things which might detract from an impression of sensuous richness. Firstly, he often refers to the seemingly more insubstantial parts of the material universe. The maiden's voice is like "woven sounds of streams and breezes", it is also like a web; and the maiden wears a veil of woven wind. He also stresses such things as the reflection of the moon, and the reflection of "rainbow clouds" in a lake. But, as many critics have hastened to add, this is merely a peculiarity of sensibility, not lack of sensibility. We might even argue that it shows an excellent ability to deal with fine discriminations. (And it is obvious that he is not insensitive to more obvious sensuous perceptions). On the other hand, Shelley's awareness of extremes of sensuous experience is not merely a personal thing, it is characteristic of the Romantic tradition and the Romantic interest in intense experience which seems to exist beyond ordinary awareness. In the present section he shows interest in distances which

give an impression of being infinite, for example, "the wide pathless desert" of sleep, and the "black and watery depth" of the lake. He also makes use of synaesthesia. In lines 154-157 the web of music, colour and movement merges the ordinary senses into an extraordinary "inmost sense". Of course, these kinds of insubstantial and relatively unusual imagery help to suggest that the vision is a moment in which intensity of sensation seems to hold perception "suspended" (l. 157) in a state of euphoria (as Shelley says, "His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess / Of love" (lines 181-182). From this point of view, it would only be confusing to think of Shelley's concern with ecstatic passion as showing lack of awareness of sensuous experience. And the present examples of mimesis in the imagery do not mean that the description lacks sensuous immediacy or richness. However, it is obvious that the description is an extreme version of the Romantic concern with emotional and sensuous intensity.

But, although the vision is a moment of intense passion, Shelley does not at any time concern himself with mere exercise of his senses and feelings. The Poet's dream is different to the kind of romantic adventure Byron offers us in parts of Don Juan. Shelley makes us interested in the wider significance of the dream and the relevance of the song. His use of conventional diction limits the sensuous effect of the dream. There are also some rather technical words, such as "intermitted" and "permeating", which appeal to reason rather than passion.

We can find passages in Byron which are similar in the combining of senses, feeling, reason and diction, but there is less tendency in Shelley to separate sensuous description and reasoning. His imagery is sensuous, but at the same time makes a clear appeal to reason; it encourages an objective, rational view of the incident. We are always aware of elaborate and rather fanciful figurative inventions. At times these make an obvious appeal to reason. For example, the voice of the maiden is at first "like the voice of his own soul/ Heard in the calm of thought" (l.153-154). In other images, where the appeal to reason is not so obvious, exaggerated, eerie and abnormal description encourages a rational response. The description of the maiden's body is sensuous, but when at times her flesh becomes transparent, the description has the strange objectivity of an anatomy text-book. For example, when Shelley describes the maiden's hands he says that "in their branching veins/The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale." (l.167-168): the emphasis upon significance in "eloquent" and "ineffable" works as description and, along with the eerie quality of the description, as a reminder that we should find significance in the dream. The description of the maiden's naked body has the same effect:

"he turned,

And saw by the warm light of their own life

Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil" (l.174-176)

Even without the reminders supplied by explicit and ambiguous comparisons, the descriptions are fantasy (extraordinary arrangements of ordinary things) and alert reason. (The device is used frequently in Romantic poetry. It is not uncommon in Wordsworth's poems. Byron uses it in the same way in poems which range from Childe Harold to The Vision of Judgement). Within this context, the imagery consistently suggests ideas about complex, interwoven patterns which are meaningful. For example, the "branching veins" suggest a many-stranded pattern, and their blood is eloquent and ineffable, thus it is like the maiden's song which is a poem containing divine revelation. The image of "permeating fire" works in the same way: the fire is kindled by the maiden's mind, it is a passion which becomes excitement of the "eloquent blood", finally it is a strange incandescence, a "warm light" from her flesh. In this way, both the content and the structure of the description form sinuous, interwoven patterns which suggest intense and rather confusing significance. There seems to be a contrived link between the incident, the techniques of description, and the significance of the incident. Of course, the strong suggestion of contrived mimesis of ideas also suggests that there is contrivance involved in the emotional and sensuous content of the vision.

Despite the evidence of immaturity and some lack of discipline, it seems possible that Shelley's version of Romantic visionary ecstasy is a more controlled and more intelligent

exploration of extremism than Eliot would suggest. As the imagery of the vision combines rational with sensuous and emotional content it is not different in kind to the imagery which Eliot admired most in his early criticism. The element of fantasy used to combine reason and description is even reminiscent of the techniques of Eliot's early poems, and the techniques of invention used by Donne, the later metaphysical poets, and in the symbolist tradition in France and England. The vision reveals ingenious artifice as well as immaturity. Shelley's failures of discipline are not more important than the concern with elaborate ingenuity in his attitude to Romantic intensity and his interest in the possibility of linking content and structure.

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The imagery of Alastor leads to consideration of Shelley's ideas, and Eliot's complaint that Shelley was a confused and immature philosopher. From this point of view, Alastor needs to be understood as a point in the development of his treatment of philosophical problems between the time he left Oxford and 1815. The essays A Refutation of Deism (1814) and Speculations on Metaphysics (1815) are perhaps the best material for establishing this philosophical background, although they are often overlooked.

In the large amount of criticism which deals with the years between Oxford and the writing of Alastor, Queen Mab (August, 1812) is the major centre of controversy. On

the whole, the discussions are concerned with Shelley's commitments to various patterns of radical eighteenth century thought in 1810-12, and the way he extricated himself from extreme radicalism and became more interested in the Platonic tradition in 1813-1815. The terms of these discussions agree with Eliot's complaint about a combination of rationalism and Platonism. Yet, in contrast with Eliot, the scholars tend to argue that Shelley was a precise and thorough student of philosophy. Furthermore, some important scholars maintain that Shelley was a profound philosopher. In his long study The Platonism of Shelley, James A. Notopoulos finds a wide range of reading and understanding of philosophy.⁽¹⁷⁾ C.E. Pulos in The Deep Truth argues that Shelley was in full command of contemporary English philosophy.⁽¹⁸⁾ C. Grabe in The Magic Plant (and in his other studies of Shelley) claims that he was original as well as profound.⁽¹⁹⁾ Apart from the problem of interpretation and definition of the ideas, the difficulty is to decide the standard of achievement by which Shelley should be judged.

Carlos Baker's comment that Shelley "dealt as vigorously as he knew how" with the idea of "a strictly materialistic necessity" represents the most wide-spread interpretation of Queen Mab.⁽²⁰⁾ I shall not attempt to disprove it, except by making a selective list from Shelley's reading at Oxford and during 1810-12: the reading list provides a possible indication

of Shelley's main interests (I do not mean that he believed everything he read). Shelley read something of Plato, although in the Thomas Taylor translation with its Neoplatonic emphasis⁽²¹⁾; he read a portion of Hume's Essays ⁽²²⁾, also Sir William Drummond's Academical Questions, and in this way he became acquainted with the English sceptical tradition⁽²³⁾. However, he read Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart and studied the English reaction against Hume and scepticism⁽²⁴⁾; although he read the French materialists, he showed considerable interest in the monism of Spinoza⁽²⁵⁾, and the radicalism of Godwin's Political Justice (which was more inclined to interest in Plato than were the theories of the philosophes⁽²⁶⁾); also he read Erasmus Darwin's imaginative scientific theories and some essays on recent developments in astronomy⁽²⁷⁾. The wide range of Shelley's reading in these years is clear: it reflects his struggles with rationalism, scepticism, and various forms of agnosticism. Furthermore, in either 1812 or 1813 he began to consider Hume's scepticism as an important means to impose order upon the ill-assorted ideas he had obtained from his early studies. C. Grabo commented upon Shelley's interest in scepticism in The Magic Plant, more recently C.E. Pulos has given a conclusive demonstration of Shelley's interest in the sceptical tradition⁽²⁸⁾. Pulos explains that it was important to Shelley that Hume's theory of cause cast doubt on external objects, and that his concept

of Necessity was conditional, tentative and philosophically ironical⁽²⁹⁾. In more general terms, the important point is that Shelley found the sceptical tradition was suited to the large degree of uncertainty in his philosophising (in particular, his equivocal attitude to religion) and his pessimism about whether it was possible to attain an elaborate formal philosophy. Hume's theory that sceptical doubt need not deprive man of agnostic belief became a basis upon which Shelley could attempt to combine uncertainty and some degree of optimism. However, he did not become an orthodox or fully committed follower of Hume⁽³⁰⁾. For example, he continued his interest in the cabbalistic traditions of the past, and he was intensely interested when he discovered more recent cabbalistic theories which suggested images, myth and poetry as means of reconciling scepticism and religion⁽³¹⁾.

A Refutation of Deism shows Shelley's interest in combining the sceptical tradition with some kind of immaterialism which would avoid traditional religion. Pulos notes that the ideas owe much to scepticism and that Shelley chose an ironic dialogue structure in order to place the essay within the tradition of the ironic theological dialogues of Sir William Drummond, Hume and Cicero⁽³²⁾. Detailed analysis of both these points is helpful for understanding of Alastor. The ironic structure is in part obvious, in part obscure. The preface is ambiguous. Shelley intends that his Christian reader should believe that the essay is a defence of Christianity against deism, and find by

the end that he must turn to atheism. The dialogue begins with the Christian, Eusebes, praising his own religion and requesting the Deist, Theosophus, to explain and discuss deism so that its errors may be pointed out. After a long defence of deism by Theosophus, Eusebes declares that in order to convince Theosophus he will prove that reason is inadequate and that one must choose between Christianity and atheism. Theosophus agrees that atheism is abominable, and submits to the proposal; therefore, he states the basic tenets of deism so that his friend may attack them. These speeches are the first half of the essay. In the second half Theosophus proves that atheism (of a particular kind) is the only alternative to deism; in fact, his arguments point to atheism as the only satisfactory form of belief. Thus the essay depends upon ironic ambiguity. The ending is particularly relevant to Alastor: the climax is ambiguous and equivocal, and it depends upon a number of levels of irony in the earlier parts of the essay.

Shelley contrives ironic disparity of effectiveness in the ideas of the two characters so that in the first half the Christian loses the argument, and in the second half wins it. He also contrives that the speakers unmask themselves, in order to do this he places incongruous ambiguities within the speeches. The first device is the common method of debate, it is only interesting at present because Shelley (despite the preface) allows Theosophus to lose and then win. The second device is more important for understanding of his techniques in Alastor. In the ambiguous passages within the speeches the words suggest

ironic implications which are the opposite of what the character intends. The first clear example is when Eusebes describes the early history of Christianity: "thousands who had boldly overturned the altars, slain the priests and burned the temples of Paganism, were loud in demanding the recompense of martyrdom from the hands of the infuriated heathens⁽³³⁾."

Eusebes admires this, but the ideas are incongruous, and we sympathize with the infuriated heathens as much as with the Christians. Further obvious ironic paradox follows: friendship, patriotism, genius, learning and courage are qualities admired by mankind "but which we are taught by Christianity to consider as splendid and delusive vices⁽³⁴⁾."

Throughout the essay the basis of Shelley's style is that he expects his readers to be aware of ambiguity and conflicting implications (managed by means of incongruity and paradox). This is also clearly apparent in Eusebes' early speeches in which rhetoric and ideas are linked in an ironic way.

Eusebes first speech reveals him to be a prig who suffers from emotionalism. Without intending to, he convinces us that his god is a cruel tyrant who cannot condone incredulity; at the end of the speech he becomes increasingly emotional, his speech more bombastic, and his emotional priggishness reflects the tyranny of his god: "I fear only lest patience should desert me before you have finished the detail of your presumptuous credulity."⁽³⁵⁾ Shelley contrives rhetorical emotionalism

in order to disparage Christianity. In contrast, Theosophus speaks in a calm and analytical manner. His first point is ridicule of mere emotionalism as a basis for belief, the argument that we must distinguish between will and understanding. Theosophus is also used to condemn foolishly anthropomorphic religions: "Barbarous and uncivilized nations have uniformly adored, under various names, a God of which themselves were the model: revengeful, blood-thirsty, grovelling and capricious."⁽³⁶⁾ If we assume that Shelley's use of ambiguity is indisputable, the ideas involved are relevant to Eliot's complaints: Shelley's linking of emotionalism and anthropomorphism shows dissatisfaction with the things of which Eliot accused him. However, these problems were not simple ones for Shelley.

Eusebes says in explanation of the difference between belief and sin that "the intensity of belief, like that of every other passion, is precisely proportioned to the degrees of excitement ... the capabilities of propositions to approach to the test of the senses, would be a just measure of the belief which ought to be attached to them."⁽³⁷⁾ The idea is derived from early eighteenth century rationalism. But in his final speech, when the relationship between faith, reason, the senses and emotion is the fundamental topic, Eusebes' primary refutation of a Perfect Creator of a Glorious Creation is derived from Hume: he speaks of the "rigid necessity of inevitable laws",

"These laws are the unknown causes of the known effects perceivable in the Universe ... the nature of these laws is incomprehensible, but the hypothesis

of a Deity adds a gratuitous difficulty.⁽³⁸⁾"

Later he makes explicit reference to Hume, as having shown "to the satisfaction of all philosophers" that causation must be explained in terms of the conjunction of objects and the inference of cause⁽³⁹⁾. But, although he rejects the idea of a divine creator, Eusebes leads us to sceptical awareness of mystery rather than materialistic atheism. He talks in terms of the laws of matter, but he raises matter to energy, and merges materialism and immaterialism:

"Matter, such as we behold it, is not inert. It is infinitely active and subtile. Light, electricity, and magnetism are fluids not surpassed by thought itself in tenuity and activity ... (and) seem to possess equal claims with thought to the unmeaning distinction of immateriality.⁽⁴⁰⁾"

Eusebes does not mean that thought is ultimate reality:

he says that "Mind cannot create, it can only perceive", it is "the effect rather than the cause of motion⁽⁴¹⁾."

He leads us to a kind of monism in which reality is matter and mind as energy. The idea owes something to Spinoza; it makes no distinction between ultimate reality and the universe: Eusebes claims that "In the language of reason, the words God and Universe are synonymous⁽⁴²⁾" and he quotes Spinoza as his authority. At this stage the major difficulty is apparent: although for the most part we seem intended to

accept the speech as a demonstration of the necessity of atheism (an ironic demonstration of the folly of Christian or deist abhorrence of disbelief), it contains ambiguous contradictions and its final meaning is dependent upon more than one level of implication. When Eusebes says that God and the Universe are synonymous, he returns us (by implication) to the idea that Power is a mystery, which he had stressed earlier by referring to Sir William Drummond and by repetition of Hume's theory of causation:

"If Power be an attribute of existing substance, substance could not have derived its origin from power. One thing cannot be at the same time the cause and the effect of another ... to deny that power is the attribute of being, is to deny that being can be."⁽⁴³⁾

In this case, power is a mystery. Firstly, the individual is limited, without verification for beliefs, restricted to a reality which might be illusory. On the other hand, there is the possibility of an impersonal ultimate reality (Power as energy and the Universe) which is beyond human conceptions of good and evil (a point which Eusebes stresses towards the end of his speech). Eusebes seems intended to persuade us to deny Christianity, deism and atheism, and turn to a sceptical interest in the mystery of Power. But this monism is not discussed in detail. It is stated through brief explicit comments and a number of ambiguous passages concerned with atheism. It combines a sceptical view of human limits and some rather optimistic ideas about power. But as constructive

philosophising, the essay is tentative.

In A Refutation of Deism Shelley makes a firm stand against emotionalism and anthropomorphism. He chooses reason rather than emotionalism. But he also follows Hume's theories to the point where they begin to undermine the value of reason. Despite his concern with reason, he seems willing to turn to intuition (as a mysterious awareness of the universality of power). Thus, he begins by rejecting some of the attitudes Eliot finds in his poetry. Furthermore, A Refutation of Deism reveals genuine enthusiasm and some talent for philosophy. It shows the detailed knowledge of eighteenth century English philosophy which Shelley's letters (and the major biographies) lead us to expect. In addition, as C.E. Pulos has explained, the context of Shelley's references to Sir William Drummond's Academical Questions (1805) reveals an incisive understanding of contemporary developments in English philosophy (understanding of Utilitarianism as an inversion of Hume's theories) and an intelligent attempt to oppose the most radical as well as the most conservative theories in order to reconcile empiricism and idealism through the sceptic tradition.⁽⁴⁴⁾ To the extent that the essay shows that Shelley's ideas were relevant to contemporary thinking and within a tradition, it disproves Eliot's complaint about "naive" philosophising. However, as a metaphysical discussion it is very uneven. The ironical structure is unsuited to clear statement of ideas (particularly in Eusebes' last speech). The obscure constructive arguments are

tentative and far from suggesting a formal philosophical system. Only with these qualifications may we talk about genuine originality. Thus the essay accords no more with Carl Grabo's evaluation of Shelley's ideas than it does with Eliot's. (45) On the other hand, Grabo's interpretation of Shelley's ideas is important for confirming disagreement with Eliot. His comments upon A Refutation of Deism are still the most helpful:

"The argument of Eusebes reduces the Universe to a self-existent monism, a fund of force which operates according to its own laws and which manifests itself as much in matter and thought as in electrical phenomena. (46)" Nevertheless the monism is obscure and tentative. The connection between scepticism and the vague theory of reality as Power lacks clarity; and there are no clear ideas about good and evil, and the multiplicity of the forms of reality, two basic problems in scepticism and monism. The poems show that Shelley's concern with these ideas led him to explore problems of content and structure which are basic in much modern poetry. But the ingenuity and artifice of the essay are immature and rather inconclusive. Shelley shows learning, an incisive understanding of contemporary thinking, and a talent for independent and ingenious reasoning; but his theories are neither profound nor comprehensive as philosophy.

Speculations on Metaphysics (1815) and Speculations on Morals (1815) show the same kind of interest in philosophy.

They contain tentative attempts to reconcile scepticism, individualism, meliorism and an imaginatively idealistic view of life. The theories are influenced more by Platonism. Speculations on Metaphysics deals with individualism and the idea that ultimate reality is mysterious power:

"(A better point of view will be achieved in philosophical enquiry) by strict scepticism concerning all assertions ... by scrupulous and strong attentions to the mysteries of our own nature ... We ought resolutely to compel the mind to a rigid examination of itself ...

(Of metaphysics). We are ourselves the depositories of the evidence of the subject which we consider ... (Only with difficulty can thought) visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards ...

The caverns of the mind are obscure, and shadowy; or pervaded with a lustre, beautifully bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals ... (Man) is not only a moral, and an intellectual, - but also, and pre-eminently, an imaginative being. (47)"

This passage is a useful guide for understanding of Alastor. Shelley's new use of images to deal with metaphysical problems is important. As Grabo stresses, it is in accordance with his increasing interest in Plato, neo-Platonism and various cabbalistic theories. In these years his interest in formal and traditional philosophy was linked with increasing interest in more mysterious and esoteric kinds of knowledge. However,

his new use of images also seems in part an inference from Hume. In Speculations on Metaphysics, in accordance with the extreme parts of Hume's theories he denies any essential difference between perception of external phenomena and such mental processes as dreaming. His emphasis upon the imagination is equivocal; the imagination seems to be very much the same as ordinary perception and dreaming. In fact, he suggests there is an important relationship between dreams and the imagination. At the end of the essay he begins to discuss dreams as an important area of research for the new metaphysics which should "compel the mind to a rigid examination of itself". But Speculations on Metaphysics was left unfinished, as was Speculations on Morals which was an attempt to rework his theories in order to construct an ethical system. In Speculations on Morals the imagination develops benevolent moral awareness: "the efficiency, the essence, the vitality of actions, derives its colour from what is no ways contributed to from any external source ... We consider our own nature too superficially."⁽⁴⁸⁾ In addition he decides that selfishness, as well as benevolence, is inherent; thus he returns, without success, to the problem of explaining imperfection within an optimistic social theory (the same problem is dealt with in The Assassins, an unfinished narrative). Despite development in his ideas in 1812-15, there were many problems he had not solved.

Alastor may be described as an experiment in the new kind of metaphysics outlined in the essays of 1814-1815. It is evidence of Shelley's interest in objective self-examination, and his uncertainty. At the beginning of the preface he says that the poem "may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind." It is explained as an allegory dealing with the development of ideals and ecstatic pursuit of communion with perfection. The allegory is to be presented by means of a fable dealing with an intelligent and talented youth who forms an image of ideal being and pursues the image with such single-minded fervour that he dies soon afterwards. Shelley, therefore, intends to combine images and reasoning, imaginative vision and philosophising, the two main kinds of enquiry which interest him. With Eliot's complaints in mind, the first critical problem is to establish that the narrative presents in some way a coherent analysis of visionary idealism. This problem also provides better understanding of Shelley's linking of poetic experience and poetic techniques.

The preface to Alastor is an introduction to the ideas and techniques of the allegory. But it is ambiguous and equivocal. The youth of the story at first seems an ideal: he is innocent, wise and a lover of nature. However, the mind and body "have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings": he searches

for a counterpart to his image of ideal love, disappointment leads to his death. So far the story suggests questions about innocence, evil and punishment: in a rather vague way it reminds us of the fall of Adam. But it contains nothing which would annoy Eusebes, in fact the description of innocence and fervent idealism might be expected to appeal to him. The second paragraph may also be interpreted as rather sentimental idealism. The youth is accused of something close to selfish individualism (i.e. "self-centred seclusion"), at the same time he is an example of the trials of the virtuous (one of the unfortunate "luminaries of the world"), as well as the "generous error" of attempting an idealistic retreat from the world; the conclusion condemns those who forsake the ideal of love within society. But there are contradictions and ambiguities which undermine sentimental interpretation of a Christian kind. The preface makes no explicit reference to Christianity. Ultimate reality is perhaps a "Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden ... extinction." The youth's death seems a harsh punishment for his generous error; and whereas "generous error" and "sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge" can be reconciled, "illustrious superstition" seems too incongruous. In this way, the preface repeats the techniques of A Refutation of Deism: ambiguity is used as a kind of euphemism, a polemical trap for an unwary opponent, a deceptively attractive puzzle. But it is difficult to distinguish between the ironic ambiguity and genuine obscurity.

We can notice incongruous correspondences (such as "joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed" and "self-centred seclusion") but we cannot distinguish between true and false ideas. In contrast with A Refutation of Deism, the ambiguity is less obviously systematic, the ideas less precise. Nevertheless, the similarity in the two styles is a useful guide to reading the poem. There is a more systematic and more elaborate use of ambiguity in the poem; on the other hand, although the poem defines issues more clearly than the preface, it is not more conclusive, and ends in a dilemma.

The invocation is a further introduction to the themes and techniques of the allegory. In the first seventeen lines Shelley invokes the spirits of the earth, ocean and air, explains the justification for his demands, and asks the muses not to withdraw their past interest. There is an obvious thread of reasoning which is complemented by orderly references to the passing of a day and the passing of the seasons, and by the conventional diction which stresses the artifice involved in the choice of a conventional invocation for the beginning of the poem. The discipline and ingenuity, including the emphasis upon the fact that the epic tradition is a convention, should evoke rational as well as emotional attention. Shelley seems to intend that his comments about his muse should imply conflicting ideas about the "natural piety" which the muse and her attendant spirits demand. The juxtaposition of "our great Mother" and "natural piety" begins the implicit

discussion of the supernatural and the relationship between man and nature. The phrase "natural piety" is ambiguous. As lines 5 -17 refer only to the natural world, and as we are very aware of the muse and invocation as conventions, the nature of the supernatural, even its existence, seems questionable. Further topics are also suggested. For example, the "great Mother" is a goddess of love: her worship includes love of nature, mysterious love in solitude, physical passion, and brotherly love: thus love is a question connected with belief in the supernatural. Lines 5 to 7 follow a day from morning to "solmen midnight's tingling silentness", whereas lines 6 to 12 follow the seasons from autumn through winter to spring. The images foreshadow some of the basic imagery in the story (for example, the poet dies as the moon descends and leaves the world in darkness), they also begin the contrasting of physical and spiritual love, and the consistent linking of sleep, midnight, death and dreams.

The second section of the invocation continues to imply equivocal ideas about the goddess. She is addressed as, "Mother of this unfathomable world". This is followed by further ambiguity and paradox:

"I have watched
 Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
 And my heart ever gazes on the depth
 Of thy deep mysteries." (l. 20-23).

"Shadow", "darkness", "depth", and "deep mysteries" are ambiguous: they suggest that the goddess is great and powerful, and that she is beyond understanding. The implications depend upon a series of parallels and contrasts; for example, the emphasis upon "depth" and "deep mysteries" links and contrasts with the previous phrase "unfathomable world". Thus the climax of his praise is also the climax of the implications of doubt. Shelley implies that death leads to knowledge and that night (as a kind of death) provides supernatural revelation (c.f. lines 23-25). The goddess is a source of life and value which might be approached through death. She stands in paradoxical relation to the individual: the idea is fundamental to the narrative (and the narrative has the same setting of dream and darkness). Lines 29-37 are more obviously ambiguous. Shelley links physical love and divine revelation. He describes attempts at communication with the goddess in which love becomes strange and grotesque. The imagery stresses paradox: for example, the night "makes a wierd sound of its own stillness". Each line contains contrasting ideas. There is frequent use of antithesis in words and phrases: for example, "sound", "stillness"; "inspired", "desperate"; "awful talk", "strange tears", "most innocent love". There are links with previous ambiguity: for example, life is staked on a "dark hope", and the phrase recalls the previous emphasis upon darkness. The orderly sequence of antithesis and paradox is

similar to the orderly ambiguity of the earlier lines:

Shelley consistently relies upon obvious formality of artifice to point to ambiguous significance and conflicting ideas.

A second climax is reached when he suggests that his strange courtship has been granted some reward (i.e. "To render up thy charge") but adds that the goddess has never unveiled the "inmost sanctuary".

Shelley refers to magic and poetry as well as love, death and the supernatural. He combines sceptical awareness of mystery with the attitude of the occult tradition to mystery. For example, in line 18 "unfathomable" implies a sceptical attitude, whereas in line 23 "mysteries" includes reference to magical rituals. The references to alchemy and the occult in lines 23 - 27 are obvious. The interest in magic is in part a desire for power, a demand that justification for faith in the supernatural must be verification of its existence. Towards the end of the invocation the merging of poetry and magic is linked with a concern that the value of the natural world should not be denied. It seems that poetic inspiration, equated with ability to write about the basic principles of existence, depends upon suspension of involvement with natural human activity; that is, it is a kind of death (c.f. lines 41 to 49). The poet is alone, his strange worship isolates him, and his motionless serenity is like death. But this is one half of a paradox. The lyre image is a paradox concerning the animate

and inanimate. In line 45, death-like ecstasy leads to life and creation. The goddess breathes life into the poet: poetic inspiration seems to parallel the original divine creation of man and the universe; it is, therefore, a kind of incarnation. The strange death into life returns the poet to more intense communion with natural life - with Nature and man. This idea seems to be linked with equivocal thinking about both dualism and monism. To the extent that the goddess is the "Great Parent" who provides the poet with a special kind of belief, Shelley suggests dualism. However, the spirit of the universe which breathes being into Nature and man, and is present in the "murmurs of the air", "motions of the forests", and "the deep heart of man" is similar to Wordsworth's spirit which rolls through all things (as the reference at the end of the preface should lead us to expect). By definition, this kind of pantheism has affinities with monism; and in Shelley's lines the clarity and intensity of the description seem to refer relatively precisely to monism. The idea that the poem will "modulate with murmurs" from everything in the universe links a further possibility with the references to monism. It seems that the poem will be a microcosm, a replica of the divine mystery of the universe. The previous references to magic are relevant: the poem will be very similar to a magic symbol in the way it provides knowledge of the supernatural. But Shelley does not commit himself to either monism or dualism. The

conflicting ideas are not resolved. It is, therefore, a sceptical concern with poetry as a medium for religious experience which is stressed. In the last lines the rather magniloquent invoking of the "Great Parent" reminds us that the goddess rules an "unfathomable world"; it points to the equivocally conventional artifice involved in his prayer to a neo-classical goddess. The references to Nature remind us that the "woven hymns/Of night and day, and the deep heart of man" have never yet for Shelley revealed the complete knowledge that he demands. Thus, in ideas and style the invocation is ironic in the same way as A Refutation of Deism. Like A Refutation of Deism it is also rather awkward. It is a rather immature attempt to combine personal intensity (including an enthusiasm for the sublime) with rhetorical ambiguity. Nevertheless, the attitude to visionary inspiration is relatively objective and coherent.

In the narrative part of Alastor the technique is the same: ambiguity implies conflicting ideas. Lines 50 to 139 explain the Poet's life before the vision which leads to his death. This section prepares a perspective within which the vision will have complex significance. Firstly, the Poet was "gentle and brave and generous"; but he died young and without anyone to mourn him. He corresponds to the ideals of the invocation in many ways: he values visions, dreams, philosophy, Nature, and the magical traditions of the past.

Shelley stresses the Poet's interest in images as sources of knowledge, and his interest in the mystery of strange religions (c.f. lines 106-128). However, as in the invocation, knowledge is connected with death (c.f. lines 119-120). And, although the Poet learns from the obscure images of past religions, the explanation is ambiguous:

"meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time."

(lines 126-128).

It is not clear whether he gained true knowledge of the supernatural, or whether he merely managed to translate the strange inventions of previous men of his kind. (The similarity to the description of inspiration in the invocation increases the ambiguity). The last incident in this section is also ambiguous. The Poet's love of nature leads to understanding of the most timid wild animals. But he pays no attention to the natural love of a young Arabian beauty (c.f. lines 129-139). The description of the enamoured maiden parallels the previous description of the doves and squirrels, "Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks" (c.f. lines 100 -106). The Poet's indifference to the Arab maiden stresses his alienation from mankind. The tone of the narrative is heroic; but there is also the possibility that this solitude is unnatural. Thus we are provided with conflicting ideas about the Poet's life immediately before the vision. But the allegory is

immature: the parallel between the maiden and the animals lacks dignity, it is grotesque, in sharp contrast with the general tone of the heroic and sublime.

Within this context, despite the relevance of the tradition of bardic inspiration, the Poet's vision should seem to be a rebellion of his body, mind and emotions against chastity and isolation. It appears while he rests in a valley which recalls the earlier references to the importance of Nature; and the bower "where odorous plants entwine" recalls the natural desires of the Arab maiden. The first images continue the idea of natural rather than supernatural desire (c.f. lines 149-152). The sensuality of the dream is obvious. It seems that the dream is caused by an unfortunate combination of idealism and frustrated natural instincts. Shelley implies that the Poet's unrealistic reaction to the dream, his search for it in the waking world, must be condemned as insanity. Therefore, the fable incorporates a great deal of the Gothic tradition of insanity and grotesque hallucination. Lines 222-271 make this explicit. The memory pursues the Poet "Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream". With his unkempt hair, wild eyes, and insensitivity to violent changes of weather and terrain (storm, sun, swamp, precipice) the Poet is a conventional Gothic madman. Thus, the extravagance of the Gothic tradition is used with some discipline in order to imply sceptical doubt about the existence of the supernatural.

However, Shelley also implies that the dream is a moment

of divine revelation of the kind described in the invocation. The Poet had journeyed across Arabia and Persia to India with a sense of ecstatic inspiration (c.f. l. 144). The vision seems to be a revelation by a goddess as a reward, or as conclusive assurance of ultimate fulfilment. It is a moment of incarnation. Yet as an image of incarnation it suggests conflicting ideas. Like the experiences described in the invocation, it fades at the moment of fulfilment. Like Shelley, the Poet cannot make his vision last. His knowledge is divine, but also frustrating, perhaps incomplete. This is scepticism different from the previous kind. It repeats the idea (stated in the invocation) that the brevity and obscurity of man's religious intuitions create dilemma, conflict between faith which is unverifiable and intelligent desire for verification. Shelley implies conflict between something like traditional religious dualism and sceptical doubt.

The vision implies a further contrast to traditional religious dualism. In the description of the goddess, spirit, flesh, mind and emotions merge together but retain the functions they possess in their usual state (as separate entities). Thus the goddess image becomes ironic: it suggests that the supernatural is not an independent, external being. The religious ecstasy seems to be mysticism which tends towards monism rather than dualism; to be more precise, the vision contrasts dualism and monism and implies interest in monism. The various elements of the vision exist as points on a

continuum. Also they are integrated more harmoniously than in the world of ordinary perception. Yet, although the ordinary boundaries between the elements are destroyed, the function of each element remains, and in fact exists with greater intensity:

"Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
 Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
 Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
 His inmost sense suspended in its web
 Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues."(1.153-7).

The soul is understood in the "calm of thought"; it also causes ecstasy of the senses; and the concept "inmost sense" is an obvious merging of the physical with the spiritual. As the song reaches its climax Shelley sustains emphasis upon the paradox of harmony made from simultaneous overcoming of differentiation and intensifying of particular functions (c.f. lines 169-177). We have already noticed that the woman of the vision seems to be clothed in her own song, that just as the other images fuse the supernatural and the natural, and emotion and intellect, the veil and the song merge into each other because they are "woven sounds of streams and breezes" and a "sinuous veil/Of woven wind". The vision, therefore, parallels the goddess of the invocation both in the ideas it suggests and the images used to describe it. The goddess of the invocation is also a nature goddess who inspires a song described as a pattern woven from nature:

"I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
 May modulate with murmurs of the air,
 And motions of the forests and the sea,
 And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
 Of night and day, and the deep heart of man."(1.45-49).

The parallel in imagery and phrasing recalls the nature worship of the invocation and helps to imply that ultimate reality is a principle of energy and order which is suffused throughout the appearances of nature. The implication seems to be that there need be no differentiation between natural and supernatural, that perhaps all appearances are aspects of divine reality which is energy and order. The insistence upon nature and natural causes suggests that the universe is a monad. This implication is supplemented by the emphasis upon self-knowledge and self-expression within the vision.

The divinity of the goddess is manifested as an overflowing of mysterious power from the innermost resources of her being. Her voice sounds "like the voice of his own soul" and is perceived by his "inmost sense". These suggestions, that divinity is a mysterious power within the individual and that true knowledge is self-knowledge, are stressed when the goddess begins to sing (c.f. lines 161-164), and the song's climax also suggests these ideas. Yet Shelley contrives the description of the vision so that in retrospect it will reveal dissatisfaction with the possibility that human knowledge is limited by the boundaries of individual consciousness. This is connected with the important

ideas about poetry implied by the vision. The goddess is a poet; and we have found that her song implies the ideal kind of poetry described in the invocation. There are also more precise resemblances between the song of the goddess and the poem Shelley prays for. The description of the music of the maiden's voice as a "web/ Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues" is relevant to, and an apt metaphoric description of, Shelley's own poem, the allegorical narrative of the Poet and the vision. It is apt because Shelley uses ingenious and complex convolutions of ideas, images and incidents to create form and significance. And we seem intended to understand the ambiguous reference of the web and veil imagery. In this case, the repetition of words, phrases and ideas, the increasing complexity of the relationship between the literal and figurative levels of the description, the lack of clarity, and the abundance of things observed and observations about each thing, are mimetic devices reflecting his understanding of ultimate reality. Thus the vision repeats earlier suggestions that the poem is a mimetic reflection of reality and that images are the medium of poetry: the divine poet of the vision is an image which appears to the Poet who in turn is an image forming part of the narrative preceded by the invocation. From one point of view, the reality reflected by the poem is a principle of order and harmony transcending or suffusing variety, change and multiplicity. The poem and its images are thought of as microcosms, replicas

of the characteristics and processes of the larger universe. But, despite the implication of mimesis, Shelley suggests doubt about the value of poetry. The ecstasy of knowledge of divine reality is ineffable (c.f. l. 268), a fact which the invocation also suggests in the phrase "incommunicable dream". From another point of view, the idea that visionary images fuse change and form is qualified by the sceptical implication that knowledge is illusion: the dream fades before fulfilment, the poet's celibacy implies doubts which conflict with the more ambitious ideas.

(6)

Alastor shows that Eliot's simplifications, including some of his more obscure assumptions, are both shrewd and misleadingly abusive. In some obvious ways, it is the poem of an intense young man whose ideas about sex, dreams, death and religion suffer from false radicalism and awkward passion. From a more narrow point of view, in part it bears out Eliot's claim that Shelley did not have a metaphysical mind. The philosophising is neither profound nor academic. There is clear evidence of philosophical immaturity. The linking of sex, dream, vision and divine revelation is inconclusive. He attempts to deal with too much at once and seems incapable of the philosophic clarity dependent upon precise and systematic definition. He makes no clear statement about good and evil and he fails to reconcile the vague and conflicting implications which suggest both monism and a theory about energy suffused through

nature. However, Alastor is certainly an attempt to submit visionary idealism to objective scrutiny. Furthermore, despite his limitations, Shelley shows the same kind of informed and incisive philosophical interest as he does in A Refutation of Deism. He shows that it is difficult to distinguish the elements of wish fulfilment and egocentric fantasy in ecstatic vision. He also suggests the relevance of dualism, monism and scepticism. Of course, his philosophising is diffuse and inconclusive. But Shelley displays and examines his uncertainty; and at the beginning he explains that we should be prepared to observe tentative analysis. Thus Alastor is not the kind of poem Eliot suggests. It is immature but relatively disciplined and on the whole not sentimental. The techniques and structure are also different. Most importantly, Shelley uses ambiguous inventions in order to imply analysis of ideas. He has an extraordinary skill in constructing elaborately detailed and ingenious designs. The style has limitations. Its meaning is not immediately clear, and when combined with uncertainty about conflicting ideas it demands careful reading as well as some qualifications about the extent to which it is coherent discussion. But with regard to form as well as content it is important that Shelley's extreme version of Romanticism is elaborately rational as well as intensely emotional. Thus Alastor is a valuable poem at least for its wide exploration of the problems of Romantic poetry. It attempts analysis of the Romantic dilemma about idealism and naturalism, and pursues radical analysis of the

Romantic attitude to images and meaning. Despite immaturity in style and content, it shows wide recognition of problems and abundant ingenuity in the treatment of them.

Throughout the remainder of the first chapter, I have chosen to discuss in most detail one of the important issues which occurs in Alastor - the close relation of form and content. The topic is interesting because it provides clearer understanding of the degree of discursive coherency in the poems and Shelley's fundamental scepticism. It is also important because in this way Shelley deals with problems which are still relevant and appear even in the work of the main modern critics who disapprove of him. In Alastor the issue of form and content arises because he links metaphysics and epistemology and tends to choose scepticism: the reality of the vision is linked with the problems associated with dreams, ecstasy and so on. Despite his various ideas about reality, he was able to imagine a single kind of mimetic pattern which would reflect his uncertainty. Alastor is an intricate pattern of narrative, symbol and discussion in which ambiguity and paradox are developed to a point where artifice merges into inconclusive obscurity. This reflects ideas drawn from dualism, monism and occultism as well as scepticism. The style is intended to reconcile precise statement and ambiguity, objective analysis and the esoteric, elaborate discipline and uncertainty. At the end of Alastor, life is defined as "the shapes / Of this phantasmal scene" (l.696-697) and the Poet is "Like some frail

exhalation; which the dawn / Robes in its golden dreams" (1.687-688); and the structure reflects these ideas.

PART II.

(1)

The idea that style reflects content appears in F.R. Leavis's criticism as well as Eliot's. In Leavis's early essays the theories (with frequent changes in detail) are simpler in their confusion and more prejudiced than Eliot's. At the basis of these essays is a simplification of Eliot's ideas about style and content - the idea that style reflects the essential moral nature of the poet. The essay on Shelley in Revaluation is crucial in the development of this idea and written as a reply to Eliot's comments about Shelley; it is also one of the most influential attacks upon Shelley. Leavis explains that Eliot's theories about belief should be replaced by his own theory, which is in fact a mimetic theory of art:

"It does ... seem worth endeavouring to make finally plain that, when one dissents from persons who, sympathizing with Shelley's revolutionary doctrines and with his idealistic ardours and fervours - with his "beliefs", exalt him as a poet, it is strictly the "poetry" one is criticizing."⁽⁴⁹⁾

The comment is obscure. Nevertheless he seems to mean that in all cases defective structure is caused by bad beliefs (the implication is dependent upon the context). Later he says more

clearly that criticism should progress from analysis of rhetorical discipline to evaluation of moral content. He then discusses When the Lamp is shattered as an example of "The transition from the lighter concerns of literary criticism to the diagnosis of radical disabilities and perversions, such as call for moral comment."⁽⁵⁰⁾ But as he believes that rhetorical disability reflects moral disability, the transition from rhetorical to moral analysis is merely a change in point of view. Thus he contradicts himself (he does find Shelley's ideas unsatisfactory) but he obscures this because he constructs a number of vague tautologies. His linking of form and content is more confused than Eliot's because he has no clear ideas about moral value and a much less clear understanding of poetry as verbal statement. His main ideal is a vague conception of moral discipline; and his understanding of reason in poetry is confused. His vague ideas about moral discipline are most obvious in the early essays in which the theory of dissociation of sensibility combines with a demand for "equilibrium" in spite of the desperate confusion of contemporary culture.⁽⁵¹⁾ These ideas are in part responsible for the bitterness of his attack upon Shelley. But his confusion about reason in poetry is more relevant to his failure with Shelley's poems.

Leavis complains that for Shelley feeling had "little to do with thinking" and that he "switched off" active intelligence. The argument reads like a development of Eliot's comments about

naive thinking and emotional displacement; and it is confused. The main evidence of Leavis's confusion is in the sections of Revaluation in which, like Eliot, he contrasts Shelley and Wordsworth. He says that "thought" is not obvious in Wordsworth's best poetry, and that his emotion is really "emotional discipline, critical exploration of experience, pondered valuation and maturing reflection."⁽⁵²⁾ Leavis's ideal is a state of being in which a number of ordinary faculties (including reason) become parts of a greater faculty (thus his theory is in line of descent from Coleridge's theory of imagination). But we should notice that as these faculties merge they seem to lose definition: "thought" becomes "critical exploration of experience". He means that he wants a complete sensibility with its parts in a state of mysterious fusion, that Shelley is a bad poet because his sensibility is dissociated. His ideas about spiritual experience are more tentative than Eliot's, nevertheless he finds some vague kind of spiritual value in Wordsworth's sensibility. (He argues that Wordsworth and Lawrence share preoccupation with "the illimitable mystery that wells up into consciousness")⁽⁵³⁾. Thus there is a tendency to a vague monism in Leavis's ideas: emotion, reason and spirit seem to be different parts of one reality. Although there is no mention of magic or bardic vision his ideas are similar to Shelley's concern (in the Alastor invocation) with spontaneity, training, "naturalness" and mystery. As recent critics (such as Frank Kermode in The Romantic Image)

have stressed the interrelationship of Eliot and nineteenth century Romanticism, Leavis's relationship with the Romantic tradition is not so surprising. Yet his monism is not only vague, it is also compounded of prejudices and fallacies in Revaluation: he distrusts reason as well as emotion, inclines towards external, physical reality, and admires discipline. As with Shelley, his vague monism, with its emphasis upon nature (as "natural" experience) combines with the idea that poetic form is a replica of content. For Leavis this means that poetry reflects unity of imaginative experience when it reflects the external universe in "concrete" statements (thus a poem is a mysterious microcosm, a replica of the poet and his universe). At the worst this confusion between poem and universe is expressed as the fallacy that imaginative meaning may be communicated by unambiguous description of a "realized object". His comments upon the failure of Wordsworth's imaginative power provide illustration. The demand is for "particularly realized experience" and there is no explanation of this; although it is clear that form reflects sensibility.⁽⁵⁴⁾ In the same way, he argues that Shelley's poems lack "vivid concreteness of realization", that they suffer from "wordy emotional generality" and contain worthless meanings.⁽⁵⁵⁾ To the extent that these comments mean there is some degree of obscurity they are relevant. But the following complaint suggests more than this:

"But there is nothing grasped in his poetry - no

object offered for contemplation, no realized presence to persuade or move us by what it is.⁽⁵⁶⁾"

Firstly, he suggests that the poems completely lack definition. The emphasis upon "grasped" and "object" is indication that his concern with "realization" and "concreteness" arises because he thinks of a poem as a microcosm: he complains that Shelley's poetry does not become a sensuous object like the things in the natural world. When this idea merges with the prejudice which provides a practical standard the result is more clearly incorrect. He argues that good poetry provides subtle descriptions of the external world and that these embody profound significance. We descend to the unambiguous eccentricity of his version of the "objective correlative" which is so closely connected with the tradition of Romantic Nature poetry. For example, he complains that Shelley has not "the sureness with which Wordsworth grasps the world of common perception":

"What is characteristic of Wordsworth is to grasp surely (which, in the nature of the case, must be delicately and subtly) what he offers, whether this appears as belonging to the outer world - the world as perceived, or to inner experience. He seems always to be presenting an object (wherever this may belong) and the emotion seems to derive from what is presented.⁽⁵⁷⁾"

Leavis is tentative, his style is elaborate, and he adds qualifications. Nevertheless he points to factual description as a medium for emotion and a criterion of excellence. He also

claims that there may be complete separation of emotion and reason. He argues that because Shelley does not "present an object", he offers "emotion in itself, unattached, in the void."⁽⁵⁸⁾ He offers the strange comment that Shelley's

emotion is bad because it is separated from reason, whereas Wordsworth's emotion is excellent because it is communicated by "concrete" facts. Thus he not only links moral value and form, his theory is also inadequate to deal with the relationship between ideas, emotion and description.

Leavis refers to the first section of Mont Blanc in order to prove that feeling is divorced from thought in Shelley's poetry. He complains of the first section:

"The metaphorical and the actual, the real and the imagined, the inner and the outer, could hardly be more unsortably and indistinguishably confused."⁽⁵⁹⁾

The crucial problem is the degree of confusion. (He would not complain if the metaphorical and the actual etc. were combined without confusion). He underrates the poem's complexity. In fact Mont Blanc is evidence that he underrates the extent to which implication and rhetorical structure are important issues in criticism of poetry (and in particular that he underrates these in Romantic poetry).

(2)

Mont Blanc was written in Switzerland in July 1816. It is close to Alastor in time, and similar in ideas and style. In fact, to some extent, in Mont Blanc the Romantic nature

poem about mind and reality becomes an allegory: the mountain and the ravine are the fable, a medium for contemplation in which a pattern of extended analogy manages to communicate ideas without continuous explicit reference to them. Analogy and similitude cause the landscape to become emblematic. This use of comparisons may be understood as part of a particular Romantic tradition. In a discussion of Romantic Nature imagery (in The Verbal Icon) W.K. Wimsatt refers to a tradition which he does not apply to Mont Blanc ⁽⁶⁰⁾. He remarks that Romantic Nature poetry differs from previous Nature poetry in that it draws from Nature a spiritual meaning unconnected with explicit religious or philosophic statements, a meaning which must be thought of as embodied imaginatively in the surface of Nature as it appears in a poem ⁽⁶¹⁾. He adds to this useful (but not unusual) comment that the Romantic use of Nature was accompanied by the development of a special "invention" or "wit". He uses Coleridge's To the River Otter as his basic example and discusses the invention as a form of metaphor. He says that the descriptive details in To the River Otter have metaphorical significance despite the fact that Coleridge does not make a traditional overt statement of similitude. He explains that the descriptive details have significance because the landscape is the occasion of reminiscence and the source of the metaphors by which the reminiscence is described: that is, both referent (or tenor) and vehicle of the metaphor are wrought in a parallel

process out of the same material⁽⁶²⁾. Both in content and structure Mont Blanc is this tradition when taken to its logical extreme and when used with considerable rhetorical ingenuity. The landscape is the occasion of a number of ideas and the source of the comparisons which present them. However, Mont Blanc begins with explicit metaphors concerning abstractions and natural scenery. Explicit description only begins after a number of philosophical problems have been stated; Shelley also explains that the description is an ambiguous medium for contemplation. Of course, there is much implication in Mont Blanc: many links between the images and many convolutions of the ideas are merely implied. The radical use of comparison causes further difficulty. Although much of the poem depends upon the discovering of new metaphors in the landscape, the major comparisons are formed by using the larger landscape outlines as a constant vehicle with a number of referents. Furthermore, the reverie prompted by the landscape consists of conflicting ideas; whereas the landscape is a constant vehicle, it refers to the same kind of uncertainty as Alastor, thus in many cases the meaning is equivocal and paradoxical. The balance of explicit and implicit comment causes obscurity. But despite the limitations caused by ambiguity, the poem is a form of disciplined contemplation and contains rational and paraphrasable statements.

The first section (lines 1 - 11) of Mont Blanc makes explicit metaphorical statements about the nature of human

perception. It also implies through metaphor that Shelley is concerned with the possibility that the power of human thought is derived from a mysterious power which transcends natural reality. Although the title suggests that contemplation of the Ravine of Arve is the source of the landscape metaphors, Shelley does not confirm this until the beginning of the second section.⁽⁶³⁾ Therefore, in the first section there is likely to be some difficulty in establishing that his philosophising is stimulated by the Ravine of Arve in the following way:

(1) The landscape impresses him with the multiplicity and variety of physical phenomena. This is stated fairly precisely at the beginning of the second section:

"Thus thou, Ravine of Arve - dark, deep Ravine -
Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale" (1 12-13).

(2) As he contemplates the nature of perception, he wonders whether there is a mysteriously creative power in the human mind. He wonders whether this might parallel a universal, spiritual power. These ideas are more explicit in the second section (e.g. "the still cave of the witch Poesy" 1.44) and developed further in the third section (e.g. "Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled/ The veil of life and death?" 1.53-54).

Two major images refer to these ideas in the first section. The first (1.1-6) has a landscape described in general terms as its vehicle; its referent is the relationship between natural phenomena, the mind and the mysteriously creative power of the mind. The second image (1. 6 - 11) has as its

vehicle a mountain landscape described in more particular terms. The second referent is ambiguous: at first the ambiguity is relatively precise, but the conclusion of the image is less lucid and suggests a new idea.

In the first image the mind is a landscape through which flow two bodies of water. There is the "everlasting universe of things" which brings its variety and multiplicity (its dark, glittering, gloomy and splendid waves). There is also the tribute of waters from the "secret springs" of the source of human thought. Both these subsidiary metaphors suggest that mind and external phenomena are important in perception, that although the mind responds to external objects it is creative, and that the mind is the medium for knowledge of reality. The landscape of this first image is abstract and not very colourful. In fact the scene is less a landscape than a waterscape, the chief impression is a concourse of tremendous waters. (This is relevant to the conclusion of the second image). The stream of water seems so great because it occurs twice in the image and because it assumes characteristics of the referents of the metaphors in which it occurs: it borrows universality from both the human mind and natural phenomena. The stream image is repeated in the final lines of the first section. Throughout lines 1 - 11 there is an interchange of ideas between the successive versions of the image, as well as between the vehicle and referent within each version. Finally, therefore, the stream image assumes independent

significance, it becomes an implicit and rather obscure symbol.

Furthermore, in lines 6 - 11 the landscape is more obviously a mountain landscape. In fact, it introduces scenery which is recognised in the second section as part of the Ravine of Arve: we meet streams, eternal waterfalls, windswept woods and the mountains. However, despite the greater clarity of description, lines 6 - 11 have caused much critical disagreement.

The problem is that in line six the referent of "its" is uncertain: the comma and dash after "waters" suggest both "the everlasting universe of things" and "the source of human thought" as the referent. Harold Bloom (in Shelley's Mythmaking) also points out this difficulty.⁽⁶⁴⁾ He attempts to argue that "its" must not be referred back to the first line.⁽⁶⁵⁾ But Shelley would not have placed the dash after "waters" unless he intended to separate "with a sound" from "the source of human thought" and thus refer it to the first line. The punctuation in the rest of the poem supports this: when the dash appears with a stop sign it signifies separation and reference to an earlier statement. Nevertheless the rhythm and the immediate syntactical structure make it impossible to read the lines without "The source of human thought" as the referent. If we attempt to choose between the alternatives, the problem is insuperable. But it is caused by false understanding of Shelley's techniques. The ambiguity seems intentional and meaningful. It is similar to the contrived and meaningful

ambiguities in Alastor. It is further ambiguity which derives from Shelley's involvement with the idea that perception and reality are a phantasmagoria of images, "the shapes / Of this phantasmal scene" as he says in Alastor. It effects a balance between the power of Nature and the secret power of the mind. Shelley refers to fairly precise ideas, he also suggests uncertainty. It seems necessary to disagree with the interpretation that the lines are unequivocal and without implicit uncertainty.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Of course, this also raises the question of the extent to which the meaning is precise philosophy. The general point of view of Earl Wasserman (in The Subtler Language) about the ideas which are relevant is the most satisfactory. Wasserman stresses Shelley's knowledge of 18th century empirical philosophy "from Sir Kenelm Digby ... to Sir William Drummond". However, he disagrees with the many interpretations (for example, I.J. Kapstein's) which define Shelley as merely torn between a number of particular philosophies⁽⁶⁷⁾. He says that Shelley argues that "reality is an undifferentiated unity, neither thought nor thing, and yet both."⁽⁶⁸⁾ He also points out that Shelley was influenced a great deal by Hume's scepticism, and that Mont Blanc owes much to Hume's ideas.⁽⁶⁹⁾ But Wasserman praises Shelley's philosophising as a profound and original extension of the empirical tradition; this seems untrue. Furthermore, the lines are not explicit; thus Shelley's philosophising leads back to discussion of his use of implication. As

many critics have pointed out for different purposes, the only relatively clear reference to an individual thinker in the first section is the echo of Wordsworth's lines upon a "something far more deeply interfused":

"A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

The ambiguity in line 6 also combines with the final version of the stream image and the more precise description of the final image to imply a further meaning. Because they are details within a similitude, the windswept woods, the eternal waterfalls, and the mountains have a potential for precise significance. Furthermore the "feeble brook" recalls the "secret springs" of human thought and the universe of natural phenomena; and the eternal waterfalls also echo the "everlasting universe of things". Therefore, the suggestion arises that the final scene is an emblem of the universe. The most important symbol within the emblem is the "vast river", the last, complicated version of the stream image in lines 1 -11. It suggests the existence of a power which transcends all natural phenomena (including the mind) and dominates the universe; thus it foreshadows the later river symbolism which reaches its climax at the end of the fourth section when Shelley describes the "one majestic River, /The breath and blood of distant lands". Of course, the emblematic significance of the image in lines 6 - 11 is not explicit, it arises from implication, nevertheless

it suggests a transcendental power in some way similar to Wordsworth's power which "rolls through all things". Shelley's American critics (who have made frequent interpretations of Mont Blanc) offer meanings for these lines, but they are evasive about the way the ideas are stated.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Wasserman's interpretation is the most relevant. He argues that the lines are a complete and coherent expression of monism.⁽⁷¹⁾ But, in contrast, they seem to be ambiguous and equivocal. Mont Blanc does suggest monism, but the first section is not an explicit and consistent statement about it. The "vast river" of line 10 suggests natural phenomena and the mind as well as a power which might be explained in terms of either monism or some kind of religious dualism. Certainly, as many critics have pointed out, the "vast river" suggests fear as well as breathless awareness of sublimity.⁽⁷²⁾

The first section shows the most important characteristics of Mont Blanc's structure. The continuity of material in the vehicles of the images (and the consequent complexity of the links between the vehicles) is accompanied by a repetitive and increasingly complex set of ideas. The discussion depends upon images which seem to be new and more complicated versions of a basic image. This basic technique is accompanied by extensive ambiguity and implication. The image of lines 6 - 11 is a striking example of this kind of complexity. It is a similitude which qualifies and also in part parallels earlier metaphors; therefore, it works as tentative metaphor as well as description.

Furthermore, it also works as a symbol which is not merely a repetition of an earlier metaphoric equation. Thus the style carries complexity and implication to an extreme. But despite tentative ambiguity and conflicting ideas, it is a form of contrived rhetoric; it is not, as Leavis described it, mere incoherent emotionalism.

The second section of Mont Blanc provides clearer understanding of the ideas about poetry and imagery which in part led to this kind of radical construction. Shelley explains that the ravine is the immediate cause of his ideas. Firstly, it shows the influence of natural objects upon the mind (c.f. lines 12-15), the multitudinous variety of the universe in lines 1 - 4. However, the mountain and the ravine also parallel both the metaphor for the mind in lines 4 - 6, and the ambiguous similitude in lines 6 - 11. They are a development of the previous ambiguous similitude.⁽⁷³⁾ Lines 15-19 also suggest that the Arve is an incarnation of supernatural force (for example, the main statement, "Power in likeness of the Arve" stresses embodiment). Thus lines 12-29 suggest that the particular scene, Nature in general, and the mind share contact with Power which appears as incarnation in all things. Lines 30-33 return to the main invention of lines 6 -11: that a landscape suffused with "unresting sound" may illustrate the relationship between the origin of power and things which are essentially powerful; they repeat the ambiguity of the

earlier lines. Therefore, when Shelley searches for "Some phantom, some faint image" (l.47) to explain "all things that are" (l. 46), it is logical he should find that the ravine and Mont Blanc are the solution to his problem. He suggests that Mont Blanc is an emblem which explains the whole natural and supernatural universe. Furthermore, in lines 34- 50 the landscape is meaningful while he is in a "trance, sublime and strange".

The statement that the landscape is meaningful while Shelley is in a strange trance recalls the previous images "strange sleep" and "unsculptured image" and repeats an implication that there are mysterious links between sleep, death, vision and the supernatural. It is important that he describes his mind as "my own separate fantasy". His ideas at this point are similar (even in phrasing) to the main themes of Alastor. In lines 34-38 images are the quintessence of knowledge and life is a phantasmagoria of ambiguous shapes, a rapid stream of strange, sublime and paradoxical shapes. In accordance with this view, his mind is "One legion of wild thoughts" (l.41). In the final lines of the section, as throughout the poem, the structure of the imagery provides mimetic illustration as well as explanation. Mont Blanc is an image in which the mind, Nature and the supernatural form a mysterious new entity. Shelley's thoughts are indistinguishable from the wind and noise of the ravine; therefore, in lines 41 - 42 they have wings and float above the landscape. The

poetic faculty, the imagination, becomes part of the landscape and (as the new image, or new reality, is suffused with spiritual power) seems to attain knowledge of absolute reality. His thoughts rest in "the still cave of the witch Poesy" and search for phantom images which will explain Mont Blanc ("some shade of thee") and the universe ("all things that are"). Mont Blanc is the end as well as the beginning of the quest.⁽⁷⁴⁾ For the moment it seems that poetry is a form of magic. There are explicit references; and the pattern of strange correspondences within the imagery also suggests magic. Mont Blanc seems to be a magic sign in which mind, Nature and the supernatural are combined in a state of "unremitting interchange". Thus an implication also arises that perhaps all things are manifestations of one reality. But Shelley does not claim it is certain the universe is a monad.⁽⁷⁵⁾ The final exclamation ("thou are there") is ambiguous. From one point of view Mont Blanc is a revelation of incarnation; and despite the tendency towards monism, there is no certain rejection of dualism. The use of "thou" is in part an ironic reminder of prayers to a divine person; it stresses uncertainty. The earlier term "Power", like "thou", suggests a dualistic view of the supernatural; but it also implies sceptical doubt. The references to witchcraft, phantoms and images also suggest that man's knowledge and power are limited as well as that symbols (and signs) have power and that the supernatural is a magnificent (although mysterious) reality. In the same way the

"still cave of the witch Poesy" and the parade of images which passes through the cave combine ideas reminiscent of both Plato and Hume. The parade of images takes place in a cave which is like the cave imagery in The Republic. But, from another point of view, the mind is described as a Humeian fantasy in which understanding is lost amongst images. And, in contrast with Hume, Shelley seems more uncertain about the reality of the supernatural and seems willing to allow the reality of external phenomena. Thus when he wonders whether the mind can transcend subjective reality, his definition of reality as a complex pattern of images (paralleled in the ambiguity of his style) is intended to suggest uncertain and inconclusive consideration of dualism and monism, religious awe and magic, and materialism as well as sceptical subjectivism.

(3)

The second section of Mont Blanc shows clearly that Shelley takes the logic of the Romantic view of nature to an extreme. In Mont Blanc the spiritual meaning of Nature is both more, and less, than the perception of a presence which is mysterious and powerful. For Shelley the outlines of the scene are an emblem which reason can interpret as evidence both for and against the supernatural. The scene is also a microcosm embodying incarnation, a divine revelation of ultimate reality. This belief in the relationship between natural things and knowledge is in part parallel to Leavis's theory. But Shelley stresses the importance of reason. His more esoteric theories

are approached through a version of rational discourse using analogy. Nevertheless, he is also far more extravagant than Leavis in his thinking about the ways in which Nature may be a medium for knowledge. In the same way, his version of the idea that structure and content should be closely related is more extreme and more elaborate. In order to reflect his idea that, whatever its final significance, present reality is a parade of interwoven images, he continually presents new images, repeats previous images with new significance, merges images together, and even works with ambiguous syntax. His merging of form and content leads to tenuous and complicated reasoning, and elaborate and ambiguous rhetorical structure which Leavis fails to recognise. The inadequacy of Leavis's criticism is shown by his comment upon Ode to the West Wind:

"(There is) a general tendency of the images to forget the status of the metaphor or simile that introduced them and to assume an autonomy and a right to propagate, so that we lose in confused generations and perspectives the perception or thought that was the ostensible raison d'être of imagery, we have a recognized trait of Shelley's: his weak grasp upon the actual."⁽⁷⁶⁾

If we apply this to Mont Blanc, Leavis has some awareness of the problem, but is unable to cope with analysis of it.

PART III.

(1)

William Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity comes much closer than Leavis's early criticism to an adequate analysis of Romantic rhetoric and poetic implication.⁽⁷⁷⁾ Nevertheless Seven Types of Ambiguity was prepared at Cambridge, published for the first time in 1930, and contains confusions similar to the limitations in Leavis's criticism. Empson's confusions fall into three main kinds:

(1) He argues that ambiguity can suggest complex patterns of rational implication and helps good poetry to make richly evocative statements. But he believes that good poetry reflects life as a struggle to "maintain one's defences and equilibrium and live as well as one can."⁽⁷⁸⁾ Therefore he defends and admires poems in which the implications are complex, vague and conflicting (his defence of Donne's A Validiction, of weeping is a striking example⁽⁷⁹⁾).

(2) Although he makes statements about value, he is evasive about a general theory of value. He concludes with an equivocal discussion of "the scientific and aesthetic points of view" in which he says we should study methods of analysis rather than theories of value.⁽⁸⁰⁾

(3) He says that English poetry displays a continuous tradition of ambiguity; and argues that Romantic poetry is a decadent form of the tradition. Nevertheless, although his seven types of ambiguity are points in a line of increasing

complexity of implication, stages of advancing logical disorder and obscurity, he believes that Romantic poems may be placed side by side with valuable metaphysical and Augustan poems in the later types of ambiguity (for example, in the fourth type)⁽⁸¹⁾.

These confusions are relevant to his discussion of Shelley. On the whole, Empson repeats the general attitude of Eliot and Leavis; in many ways his criticism is a refinement upon the ideas of Eliot and Leavis. He complains that Shelley's thinking was hurried and muddled; that it is almost unintelligible because it was not part of his conscious mind; that Shelley's inspirations were never "conceived in action or in an environment" ⁽⁸²⁾. The discussion in terms of ideas rather than emotion is closer in emphasis to Eliot than Leavis.

However, as Empson argues in detail that the tradition of ambiguity is continuous, his attitude to Shelley's style is more clearly equivocal than Eliot's. The following passage is his final reference to Shelley, and the most extreme example of his distrust of Romanticism:

"But, of course, even if it be true that the nineteenth-century technique ... is in part the metaphysical tradition dug up when rotten, still that is no reason to think there is no other way to read it. One might deduce from what I have said that Shelley could only be enjoyed by persons intimately acquainted with the past history of English poetry, which is far from true."⁽⁸³⁾

The vague argument shows his uncertainty about the value of both ambiguity and poetry. Although his main point is that Romanticism uses bad devices, he allows that it is closely related to the metaphysical tradition. Therefore, he also explains that nineteenth century poetry is full of "subdued conceits and ambiguities", and that the reader must be able to interpose a pun which has not "been made", and a conceit which "has not actually been worked out."⁽⁸⁴⁾ In this way, in spite of his complaints about muddled thinking, he uses To a Skylark in order to discount some of Eliot's more extreme opinions. He explains that the poem contains numerous complex, rational implications which are suggested by a number of "short-circuited" comparisons. And in a short passage from Hellas he finds further "short-circuited" comparisons and at least one pun which is "almost a conceit".⁽⁸⁵⁾ Although the comments are vague, he even allows qualified praise of Shelley's imagery.

Whereas Empson places Shelley within a tradition of disciplined artifice and ingenuity, he insists that Shelley provides only "short-circuited comparisons", "subdued conceits" and obscure puns, and that his ideas were not part of his conscious mind. But Alastor and Mont Blanc show that the complaints about lack of conscious artifice and lack of developed inventions are false. Mont Blanc is a reverie in which there is contrived ambiguity as well as obscurity. Of course Shelley's ideas are uncertain and there are also

frequent relaxations of rhetorical discipline. But in part Shelley's tenuous, obscure and repetitive imagery is a contrived, mimetic reflection of his ideas about reality.

(2)

In the second section of Mont Blanc there are images which might be described as short-circuited comparison and subdued conceit. The subsidiary images are fragmentary and repetitive and show the extent to which Mont Blanc is a loosely disciplined reverie. We find the following development of the "wild woods" image which first appears in line 8:

"Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging.
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear - an old and solemn harmony;" (l.20-24).

The image is complex. The pines are a brood; they are children; they are revered by the winds; and their noise is an ancient hymn. Continuity and coherence depend upon the comparisons and their rational implications rather than observation of the landscape. The immediate significance seems to be a major topic, a brief comment upon this, and some other ideas which are not linked together clearly. The topic is the supernatural and worship. There is a chain of worship: the wind worships the trees which worship the mountain. Thus the synaesthesia of "drink their odours" helps

to imply that the supernatural is universal, underlying all apparent dissimilarities. But this idea depends upon tenuous links between the metaphors. Because the pines cling to the ravine, they become children (but of "elder time", not of the ravine) and this emphasis upon dependence links with the more explicit reference to devotion. The syntax is ambiguous: "in whose devotion" suggests that the pines and the winds are devout. Shelley then suppresses the first metaphor, but not its significance. The trees become giant censers; but the metaphor is only effective when the explicit reference to devotion in line 21 supplements the reference to church ritual implied by "drink", "odours", and "swinging". Furthermore, whereas "swinging" implies that the pines are censers, it also helps to change them into church-bells which in the next line ring out an "old and solemn harmony". The reference to children and the consistent personification suggest that the "solemn harmony" is sung by a choir as well as a chime of bells. In this way the image consists of ambiguous implications and cross-currents of ideas between the vehicles and referents of the metaphors.

The image is a rather complex version of mixed metaphor. Nevertheless, to some extent the relaxation of the logical decorum of the vehicles of the metaphors (paralleled by relaxation of the normal rules of syntax) is justifiable as a relaxation of one kind of rhetorical discipline in the interests of another. The description of the landscape is part of an

extended comparison; and the metaphors manage to suggest a complex pattern of implications. But there are also some obvious failures of discipline which are careless and unjustifiable. The sequence of vehicles "brood", "children", "devotion" is awkward but not difficult to accept. However, the "chainless winds" are a distraction. And the "odours" of the "giant brood" are grotesque bathos. These are failures of conscious control; and in this case we should notice the possibility that uncontrolled puns helped to form the links between the metaphors (i.e. devoted children and "devotion"; and the half-pun "swinging", singing). However, complete lack of control is the exception within the image. For example, in the most frequent kind of irrelevancy, relaxed discipline allows Shelley to imply ideas which will have later logical meaning but are not connected coherently to the present main topic. The metaphor "children of elder time" and the adverbs "still" and "ever" provoke questions about the origin of the supernatural and the relationship between past and present. The "chainless winds" suggest that some comment is necessary about freedom. The implications suggested by the "old and solemn harmony" of the pines might be considered as a further example. Shelley suggests that song (or some kind of musical praise) can contact the supernatural. The development of the image does not attend to these topics: they become minor undercurrents within the reverie. But they do not remain incoherent. For example, the ideas about song

are explained at the end of the second section (although the links between the images are very tenuous) when Shelley praises Mont Blanc, his thoughts grow "wandering wings", and the vision seems to attain fulfilment.

The image has a further level of meaning which reveals the same combination of ingenuity, ambiguity, relaxed discipline and imprecision. As an elaborate development of the "wild woods" image in lines 6 - 11, the description of the pines is an emblem which fuses the human, natural and supernatural worlds. (Thus the awkward link between "brood" and "children" seems to result from concern with discursive meaning). As a development of the earlier image, the pines function as symbols. One level of ambiguity in line 12 suggests that the ravine is an emblem of the mind; therefore, the pines seem to become a symbol for earlier religious experience. The "chainless winds" also assume symbolic significance. As the winds are "chainless" and take part in the religious ritual of the pines, they become symbols for the most important, free and spiritual faculties of the mind. Of course, this interpretation conflicts with my earlier comment that "chainless" suggests ideas not linked immediately with the main statement. However, as the image contains progressive levels of ambiguity, both interpretations seem to be valid. And we must assume the possibility of further valid interpretations. For example, Wasserman supplies a relevant interpretation (although he implies too much philosophical precision and certainty). He says, that the

continuous duration of the pines and the flux of the winds imply that reality is enduring transiency; and that as the harmony of the pines is caused by the winds it implies rejection of the epistemology of subjective idealism⁽⁸⁶⁾. Of course the scope for varying interpretations arises because the present symbols are merely tenuous implications. The phrase "Children of elder time" only tends to function as a symbol because it is an obscure parallel to earlier imagery and occurs within an ambiguous analogy.

The use of implicit symbolism is an unstable amalgam in which a number of conventional devices are combined. In theory it is not lucid. In practice, as the image is part of an analogy, attention is directed to its descriptive significance; as the analogy parallels an earlier analogy there is confusing repetition; the reappearance of images with previous significance helps to suggest symbolism; as there are no true symbols we search for ideas in the literal meanings of the device and their connections with previous ideas; therefore, the descriptive facts seem important although the discursive significance is generalizations which are merely implied. The device gives a false impression of particularity and clarity (and our dissatisfaction is relevant to the demands of Leavis and Eliot for evocative description of natural objects). If we think of it as a complex kind of mixed metaphor, the parallels between the vehicles of the metaphors, interchanging of ideas between the referents and vehicles within metaphors,

and the links between the referents and vehicles of successive metaphors cause the same difficulty. But it is not completely obscure, not a completely "subdued" conceit. Despite some evidence of lack of control, there is a large amount of conscious ingenuity. It seems obvious that the relaxed rhetorical discipline is in part a concern with intensely elaborate invention. At the same time, this kind of elaborate invention, despite some degree of clarity, and the attaining of flexibility which allows complex implication, causes considerable obscurity, even imprecision. Furthermore, Shelley seems to be aware of the obscurity. He defines his mimetic interest in a parade of images as observation of an "unremitting interchange" of "shadows that pass by". At times Mont Blanc is a contrived attempt to follow mimetic obscurity to the extreme point where there is the very finest difference between complex implication and complete lack of meaning.

The third section of Mont Blanc contains a subsidiary example of mimesis which shows Shelley's extreme use of contrived obscurity. In the third section the imagery becomes increasingly ambiguous and obscure in order to qualify the previous vision and suggest increasing uncertainty. The ideas appear in most of Shelley's major poems (and so many works of other Romantic writers): he reaches a climax which implies that the supernatural exists and can be known, but his faith

becomes uncertain and he qualifies it with sceptical doubts. He wonders whether "some unknown omnipotence" has made Mont Blanc a medium for revelation. The concepts suggested by "unfurled/The veil of life and death" (l. 53-54) have caused difficulties in critical interpretation. However, like lines 6 - 11, these lines seem relatively clear, and important. The "veil of life and death" is similar to the veil of rainbow and waterfall which robes the unsculptured image of eternity at the summit of Mont Blanc (c.f. lines 25-29). As Shelley has explained earlier, in his visionary trance he seems to be watching an interwoven pattern of images in which shapes from the world of perception mingle with shapes from the realm of death. This interwoven veil of vision (reminiscent of the veil of the vision in Alastor) seems to have been "unfurled" by some supernatural power for him to study. Nevertheless his faith is uncertain. In lines 54-60, images of fading visibility stress uncertainty. The vision is like a cloud (a suitable image as the veil in line 26 is made of rainbows and a waterfall) blown away by an invisible wind. In line 60 the summit is remote and the concern with visibility is repeated. The imagery is ambiguous. In lines 61-66, contrary to the complaint about distance, the description is vivid and realistic; but few of the details have discursive significance and the ideas are obscure. The strong realism and obscurity of images such as "unearthly forms" and "Blue as the overhanging heaven" suggests that the mountain is merely an image of natural

perception; on the other hand, the alien, deathly beauty of the summit becomes linked with the supernatural. The technique of increasing both the reality of the description and the tenuity of the discursive implications is continued. The desert image is interesting as the first part maintains reference to the supernatural, whereas the second part suggests fairly firmly that the mountain cannot explain the supernatural:

"A desert peopled by the storms alone,
 Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone
 And the wolf tracks her there - " (lines 67-69).

Line 67 recalls the imagery of lines 27-29. It seems to repeat the implication that the desert-summit is Power. But lines 67 and 27 are rather far apart; neither the desert nor the storms have explicit symbolic significance in the earlier image; and the desert has become alien and unfathomable, and suggests fear and distrust of the supernatural. The supernatural in earlier lines is a world inhabited (or "peopled") by ghosts, phantoms and shapes of various kinds; but now it is "peopled by the storms alone". Firstly, it is difficult to determine the significance of the image; secondly, although it implies reference to Power, it suggests in part that the mountain does not embody the supernatural. The eagle, hunter and hawk have no previous emblematic significance. Yet they work as what we might in fact term subdued conceits. They are not explicit comparisons, they are particular descriptive facts. Yet they occur within a larger tentative and ambiguous analogy.

Therefore, we seem intended to derive relevant abstractions from them. Shelley seems to refer to the conventional generalization that all wolves and eagles are predacious. As the wolf and eagle are parts of Mont Blanc which represents Nature, he implies that Nature is cruel and savage. And, despite the suggestions to the contrary, these lines also merge with the idea that the supernatural is alien, and perhaps cruel and destructive. The conflicting ideas contrived in this way reach their climax in the ambiguous aphorisms which end the third section. The aphorisms provide a climax although the ideas are inconclusive. They refer ambiguously to tentative faith in the supernatural, dissatisfaction with naive pantheism, and sceptical rejection of the supernatural. The increasing obscurity of the third section, therefore, is in part a mimetic device which causes the reader difficulty and confusion in order to communicate increasing philosophical uncertainty. Of course, there is an obvious connection between this and the scepticism expressed as a mimetic interest in intricately interwoven and unstable imagery.

(3)

Mont Blanc shows there is some truth in the complaint about mindless writing, muddled thinking and obscure structure in Shelley's poetry. Yet it also shows that Empson's account of Shelley's techniques is a confused simplification. It illustrates the fallacy involved in making too arbitrary applications of terms such as "mindless" and "unconscious" in

rhetorical analysis. From one point of view the structure of Mont Blanc merely shows that extensive relaxation of rhetorical discipline may be used to attain complexity of implication; and this fact underlies most of Empson's interpretations in Seven Types of Ambiguity. The range of design in Mont Blanc from formal figurative invention to ingenious manipulation of mimetic obscurity, and the obvious difficulties in interpretation, point to the inadequacy of Empson's basic ideas about poetry as well as his misunderstanding of Shelley's techniques.

Empson's most thorough definition of the value of ambiguity, which occurs in his discussion of Shelley, is a useful starting point for working out a more satisfactory theory:

"In so far as an ambiguity sustains intricacy, delicacy, or compression of thought, or is an opportunism devoted to saying quickly what the reader already understands, it is to be respected (in so far, one is tempted to say, as the same thing could not have been said so effectively without it, but of course, in poetry the same thing could never have been said in any other way). It is not to be respected in so far as it is due to weakness or thinness of thought, obscures the matter in hand unnecessarily (without furthering such incidental purposes as we have considered) or, when the interest of the passage is not focussed upon it, so that it is merely an opportunism in the handling of the material, if the reader

will not easily understand the ideas which are being shuffled, and will be given a general impression of incoherence. (87)"

There are some incidental confusions and equivocations in the definition. When Empson says that "the same thing could never have been said in any other way" he seems to suggest that, because a poem is unique, all good ambiguity transcends evaluation. His understanding of the way in which a poem is unique is too superficial and muddles his ideas about evaluation. Every poem is unique; on the other hand, every intelligible poem has a rhetorical structure with a degree of effectiveness which (in theory) may be estimated. The term "delicacy" in the first sentence is certainly too vague. If we apply Empson's definition to Mont Blanc, the poem has intricacy and complexity of thought; but it also has "weakness of thought", obscurity, and an unstable amalgam of analogy and allegory which makes our attention alternate between description and various levels of discussion. Weakness of thought seems a characteristic of bad ambiguity; but it seems less probable that complexity and compression of thought are essential characteristics of good ambiguity. Neither complexity of structure, nor complexity of content, is the basis of value in poetry. With regard to content, if we are to define poetry properly, we must avoid the earlier concern with "equilibrium", the idea common to Eliot, Leavis and Empson that in good poetry some kind of force or tension (rather like Pater's image of

flame-like intensity) links conflicting ideas and emotions together in a state of exquisite balance. In good poetry words are a complex medium which makes a clear statement of valuable experience. Firstly, the aim of poetry should be to make meaning explicit. As Graham Hough has said, a poem "ought to make the same kind of sense as any other discourse." (88). Secondly, we should not confuse variety and complexity of rhetorical method, and complexity of rhetorical structure and meaning. Therefore, as ambiguity communicates meaning by implication, its value is limited. Of course, this definition of poetry also makes more pressing the questions about comparisons, description, mimesis and emotion which are suggested by Mont Blanc.

PART IV.

(1)

In many ways my definition of poetry as clear statement reflects the theories of Yvor Winters, the most profound contemporary critic I have read. Winters' comments about Shelley, and some important issues in his criticism, are very relevant to the problems raised by William Empson's point of view. For the most part I shall refer to two major collections of essays, In Defense of Reason and The Function of Criticism. (89)

Winters defines poetry as a kind of "experiential

complex", an almost fluid complex of relationships which "partake of the fluidity and unpredictability of experience and so provide a means of treating experience with precision and freedom."⁽⁹⁰⁾ He begins with a much clearer understanding of poetry as verbal communication than either Empson or Leavis. Therefore, when he defines the form of poetry as "the last refinement of contemplation"⁽⁹¹⁾, there is some similarity between his ideas and Leavis's, but his understanding of this concept is more profound. He also makes a clear statement about the relationship between reason and emotion:

"The poem is good in so far as it makes a defensible rational statement about a given human experience ... and at the same time communicates the emotion which ought to be motivated by that rational understanding of that experience."⁽⁹²⁾

He argues that the poet's task is to adjust feeling to motive precisely.⁽⁹³⁾ With this basis he provides comprehensive and usually incisive criticism. He gives a convincing demonstration of the main tradition of English poetry (with Jonson and George Herbert as major examples); and he stresses the links between Romanticism, Imagism, and Symbolism. His explanation of the continuity of experience in nineteenth century and contemporary poetry and criticism includes incisive analysis of decadent reason and emotion in poetry. This is particularly relevant to the content and form of Shelley's poetry and

Shelley's relationship with the more popular modern tradition. He says, that a tendency to nonsense in poetry:

"should naturally have been released, as it appears to have been, by a period of amateur mysticism, of inspiration for its own sake, by a tendency such as that which we have for some years past observed, to an increasingly great preoccupation with the fringe of consciousness, to an increasing emphasis on the concept of continuous experience, a tendency to identify, under the influence, perhaps, of scientific or romantic monism, subconscious stimuli and reactions with occult inspiration, to confuse the divine and the visceral, and to employ in writing from such attitudes as this confusion might provide, a language previously reserved to the religious mystics ... In such an intellectual milieu semi-automatic writing begins to appear a legitimate and even a superior method."⁽⁹⁴⁾

But although Winters states such incisive generalizations about the recent popular tradition, his reading of the early Romantic poets, and Shelley in particular, is defective.

His comments about Romantic Nature poetry might well have been the starting point for W.K. Wimsatt's theories; but whereas Wimsatt finds some artifice and reasoning, Winters ignores this possibility. These comments about Romanticism occur in the early essay "The Experimental School in American Poetry".

Winters attacks recent American Romantic poetry by defining seven kinds of poetic statement. His basic assumption

(which seems to be unquestionable) is that poems which cannot be paraphrased are defective. The three kinds relevant at present are the fourth, pseudo-reference, the fifth, qualitative progression, and the seventh, double mood. Unfortunately, in these he too often works by simplifying the problems which his examples point towards. In the fourth kind, he explains that contemporary poets often seem to aim at coherence of feeling with a reduction in rational coherence: he uses the term "pseudo-reference" when a poet, in the cause of emotional writing, seems to claim more rational coherence than the poem has. Within this section he explains Romantic Nature poetry as a version of "implicit reference to a non-existent symbolic value". He cites Shelley's Ode to the West Wind as a particular example of the general Romantic procedure. He says that the landscape is irrelevant to the feeling, and meaningless, it is a symbol "used to embody a feeling neither relevant to the symbol nor relevant to anything else of which the poet is conscious: the poet expresses his feeling as best he is able without understanding it."⁽⁹⁵⁾ Thus his view of Shelley is similar to the complaints by Eliot, Leavis, and Empson about emotional displacement and unconscious, automatic writing.⁽⁹⁶⁾ It is typical of the criticism of the 1930's, although part of a more thorough rejection of poetic weakness. Like Eliot and Leavis he tends to imply that Shelley is one of the worst Romantic poets. For example, in the seventh class, Winters defines the Romantic version of irony. He exposes in Laforgue,

Pound, Eliot and Wallace Stevens a version of antithesis in which two attitudes are at variance but neither is rejected: "the irony is simply the act of confessing a state of moral insecurity which the poet sees no way to improve."⁽⁹⁷⁾ He condemns this too quickly and too harshly. However, he does imply that it may often lead to rhetoric which is complex, diffuse and imprecise.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Yet, although Mont Blanc and Alastor show that these insights are relevant to Shelley's poetry, Winters merely finds Shelley suffers from "uncritical emotionalism" and that his work is much less valuable than Pound's.⁽⁹⁹⁾ In the same way, the fifth section, qualitative progression, in which relaxation of rational intensity tends to form a loose reverie with unstable structure, is relevant to Shelley's poetry. But Winters would not believe Shelley to be worthy of serious consideration even from this point of view.

Winters' failure with Shelley is paralleled by further points of weakness which are relevant to evaluation of Shelley's poetry. Firstly, his seven kinds of technique tend to obscure understanding of the relationship between loose rhetorical discipline, implication and nonsense. The crucial fact, as Winters himself states in another essay, is that "every term in criticism is an abstraction, that is, in a sense, is statistical or quantitative in its own nature."⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ When we deal with implicit reasoning, as Mont Blanc also shows, the problem is to decide (with as much precision as we can manage) where the poem stands on the continuous scale which stretches

from obscurity to nonsense. We should assume that there are many useful reference points on the scale. Yet Winters' assumption that Shelley is merely emotional and uncritical is paralleled by a tendency to distinguish only between reason and nonsense in the examples of the seven techniques (although his generalizations discount this very fallacy). For example, he attacks Hart Crane's poem The Bridge because, "One can read a certain amount of allegory into this, but in so far as one makes the allegory definable or comprehensible, one will depart from the text."⁽¹⁰¹⁾ But he obscures the fact that this is true of all occasions when there is implicit meaning in a poem.

The tendency in Winters' practical criticism to simplify the relationship between reason, emotion and form is in part connected with a tendency in his generalizing to equate form and emotion, and form and moral value, despite basic denial of these fallacies. In the early essay, "The Morality of Poetry", although he assumes that poetry is not antecedent to morality, he says:

"The poetic discipline includes the antecedent discipline and more: it is the richest and most perfect technique of contemplation ... Poetic morality and poetic feeling are inseparable; feeling and technique, or structure, are inseparable. Technique has laws which govern poetic (and perhaps more general) morality more

widely than is commonly recognized. (102),

This reads well at first, because there is some truth in it, and because it is part of a profound and idealistic view of poetry. But it is vague at crucial points, and suggests some false ideas about criticism. His claims for poetry as a technique of contemplation are admirable in so far as they mean that the finished form of a poem should be the result of the most perfect possible defining and evaluating of a particular experience, and that poetry has many resources for this. It is also true that from one point of view the form of a poem is unique and that in some ways the experience and the form are interdependent. Furthermore, the reader may choose to examine the particular ways the poet has used the resources of poetry, the extent to which the poet has used these resources to define experience, and the skill and discipline involved in using the techniques as aids to contemplation of experience. But Winters tends to misinterpret the ideas that the form of a poem is unique and that poetic form is a method of contemplation. He goes beyond these and confuses rhetorical form, rhetorical discipline and morality. There is no necessary connection between the techniques of rhetoric and moral value, or between rhetorical and moral discipline, although some techniques provide greater rhetorical discipline than others and are more valuable as methods of contemplation. With reference to these ideas, Winters (like Leavis) supplies an illustration rather imprecise and confused discussion of Rochester; and he is in danger

of claiming too much perfectibility for reason as well as that technique and moral value are inseparable.⁽¹⁰³⁾ As with Leavis, although to a much lesser extent, his confusion about form and value is connected with some confusion about form and emotion. For example, in "The Morality of Poetry", he says that emotion is conveyed by the paraphrasable as well as the non-paraphrasable content of poetry. But he explains that in Allen Tate's The Subway, the rational content says that the poet is going mad whereas the whole poem says nothing of the sort because the form establishes a feeling of self-control.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ At the best this interpretation is too optimistic, at the worst it points to practical confusion about the value of implication.

Winters' important later essay, "Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature", (in The Function of Criticism) also combines profound understanding and misunderstanding of mimesis and the value of implication. He argues that the lyric is expository and that expository statement is the most powerful and sensitive mode of writing. He shows that in the late sixteenth-century English lyric the basic structural principle is logic and adds:

"I am quite aware that simile and metaphor, involving sensory perception, are often used in these poems, although very often they are not, and that there are sometimes elements in such poems to which one might refer figuratively as narrative or dramatic; but all of these are subordinate to the formal principle which I have

just named (i.e. logical rational discourse)⁽¹⁰⁵⁾,"

This is similar to the argument in another later essay, "Poetic Styles, Old and New", in which he considers poems by Shakespeare, Donne and Jonson and concludes that the comparisons are decorations, and, at their best, explicit figurative excursions from definitions.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ The basic point of view is that as comparisons are implicit rhetorical devices their value is limited. Nevertheless in both essays he turns away from this to suggest a quite unsatisfactory programme for poetry. In "Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature", although he wants action and sensory perception, he demands, in very necessary opposition to the early criticism of Eliot and Leavis, that the poet should be free to generalize. But he then attempts to define a new kind of poetic excellence, and points the way by reference to Les Fleurs du Mal and Paul Valéry's Ebauche d'un Serpent (which he claims is the greatest poem he has ever read). He praises Valéry's poem, firstly, because it is contrived and intelligent mimesis, secondly, because it transcends (although it is an amalgam formed from) Renaissance poetry in which logic is accompanied by explicit comparisons, and Romantic poetry in which sensory images assume vague emotional and rational significance:

"we get the sharp sensory detail contained in a poem or passage of such a nature that the detail is charged with meaning without our being told of the meaning explicitly, or is described in language indicating

such meaning indirectly but clearly. (107) "

"the physical details live in this texture with a kind of electrical energy. In the detail, just as in the structure, Valéry has recovered what was usable in the innovations of the decadence, and has incorporated them with what was best in the traditional method. (108)"

He points forward to poetry in which there would be considerable ambiguity and implication. The fusion of rational meaning and sensory details he demands is a mysterious amalgam (e.g. "a kind of electrical energy") too much similar to the Symbolist idea that art must be mysteriously embodied, or incarnate, meaning. In fact, the appraisal of Ebauche d'un Serpent might well be mistaken for a sympathetic appraisal of Mont Blanc. In "Poetic Styles, Old and New" his analysis of Wallace Stevens' Sunday Morning and the image "casual flocks of pigeons" leads to the same conclusion: he praises the description because, as it embodies ideas as well as emotion, "ambiguity is rendered with the greatest precision." (109) Thus, even in these late essays, he does not define consistently the relationship between sensory details, comparisons, rational meaning and obscurity.

Firstly, sensory details which are not parts of comparisons can be related effectively to rational meaning and emotion in a poem. This is the way of ordinary experience, and no good theory of poetry should ignore it. Secondly, if the aim of poetry is considered to be clarity and precision of contemplation of experience, the necessary relationship between comparison and

meaning, and the general value of comparisons and ambiguity seems relatively obvious. At the best, comparison and ambiguity should present disciplined contemplation involving coherent reasoning, feeling and general perception, but this does not mean that they must fuse reason, emotion and the senses into a new and different mode of experience. Comparison and ambiguity should be as explicit as possible. Furthermore, as with any kind of implication, we must assume that their value decreases in proportion to their deviation from clarity of disciplined contemplation and their degree of obscurity (and recognition of mimetic forms, and dramatic and narrative genres should not affect this general attitude to value). Thus Winters' most fundamental tenets seem to suggest a kind of poetry much different from Ebauche d'un Serpent or Sunday Morning. Mont Blanc is a particular example which shows the imprecision caused when comparison becomes too important in poetic contemplation, and when a poem is a radical amalgam of description, comparison, discussion and mimesis. However, Winters criticism, along with Shelley's ideas, and the criticism of Leavis and Empson, shows the danger of generalizations which are too narrow and arbitrary. It is unnecessary, in the rejecting of Valéry and Stevens as ideals, to go to the opposite extreme and, in the interests of precision, attempt to prohibit the number and variety of the techniques and kinds of poetic contemplation. We should be prepared to consider a scale of value dealing with technique, and differences of precision in examples of each technique.

Formal comparison and irony obviously are more valuable than more unstable versions of description and discussion.

Therefore, after some rearranging, Winters' ideas provide a satisfactory way of explaining the techniques and ideas of Shelley's early poems. In both Alastor and Mont Blanc Shelley combines ecstatic intensity of inspiration, a degree of automation, equivocal scepticism and a multitude of ideas and elaborate inventions very often dependent upon an extreme degree of implication. We must condemn the obscure and unstable parts of Shelley's techniques, as well as the lack of proportion between the complexity and obscurity of his rhetoric and the equivocal uncertainty of his ideas. But it is unfortunate that so much criticism has obscured his use of elaborate contrivance, his characteristic combination of richness of description, intensity of inspiration and complexity of implication. The amalgam of description, comparison and contemplation of complex experience which he provides is often brilliant of its kind, even in these early poems.

(2)

In lines 420 to 514 of Alastor the Poet comes to a beautiful but strange and even rather unhealthy forest which is one of the most striking inventions in the poem. This episode contains the second vision and balances the description of the first vision. It contains the uneven diction, rather too abundant description, and repetitive imagery which occur throughout the poem. But it is, firstly, a brilliant

combination of description of nature and narrative. The description is full and elaborately detailed. Shelley describes the smallest flowers, "Minute yet beautiful", as well as the "pyramids /Of the tall cedar" and the pattern of leaf, sky and cloud above. We see the forest in the distance as a "brown magnificence" and then enter under the trees, through the luxuriant masses of leaves, brilliant flowers and creepers, to the central "darkest glen" where "the grass that sprung/ Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel/ An unaccustomed presence". The forest is an elaborate evocation of a particular visionary place. It is impressive as a description which embodies the multiplicity of kind and the convolutions of form and relationship in nature. It is also a vividly sensuous description of nature as a creation suffused with sentient energy. The grass which "startled and ... trembled" shows this last characteristic; and everywhere in the forest nature is reaching out, trembling and flowing with creative life:

"The oak,

Expanding its immense and knotty arms,

Embraces the light beech." (l. 431 - 433).

"Like restless serpents, clothed

In rainbow and in fire; the parasites

. . . flow around

The grey trunks, and . . .

. . .

twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs

Uniting their close union." (l. 438-445).

This creative life is in part spiritual energy and beauty. Despite some limitations in diction and in the selection and ordering of detail, the description on this level is not surpassed by anything comparable in Coleridge, Keats, or even Wordsworth. Although it is more fanciful, less selective in detail, and more elaborately mimetic than the best of Wordsworth's descriptions (for example, in the later sections of the 1805 version of The Prelude), the response to the multiplicity and mystery within sentient nature is as intense.

In addition it has characteristics as description of nature which are present in the work of the other early Romantic poets but are developed more thoroughly by Shelley. There is less attention to the differences between the natural and the supernatural than there is for the most part in the poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The combining of nature and religion is more flexible and more frequent, at times there seems to be no necessity to distinguish between the natural and the supernatural. For example:

"The pyramids

Of the tall cedar overarching, frame

Most solemn domes within." (l. 433-435)

"One darkest glen

Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with
jasmine,

A soul-dissolving odour, to invite

To some more lovely mystery." (l. 451-454).

In the second image, the natural description provides the same kind of experience as the vision in which the goddess appears. Ecstasy of the senses (including sensual passion) and spiritual ecstasy are almost indistinguishable. The religious vision is intense; and it is also ritualistic, and indefinite and elusive. The inspiration is luxurious and rather languorous as well as solemn. Furthermore, the intense and mysterious life within the forest is inseparable from darkness, decay and mysterious death; there is a strange continuity between life and death. The brilliant gloom seems to combine day and night. It makes the "dark blue light of day" and "night's noontide dearness" indistinguishable. The forest grows "More dark/And dark"; but it does not obscure sight, and the luxuriant growth is "clothed /In rainbow and in fire". Within the gloom, the luxuriant trees and flowers seem to be linked with decay. This is suggested by the brilliant parasites which flow around the trees, and the brilliant birds and insects (c.f. lines 465-466). Beneath the cedars and oaks there are trees which are "tremulous and pale"; the parasites threaten death for the grey trees they embrace; and the description of Silence and Twilight which "sail among the shades, /Like vaporous shapes half seen" suggests the presence of a phantom life merging with the forest's vigorous natural life, and perhaps inseparable from it. In a way the forest also seems artificial, and unreal. It is both tropical and European. It seems to be an

invention involving artifice as well as a natural landscape of luxuriant chance growth. For example, the passionate oak with "immense and knotty arms" suggests unconscious natural life, but the cedars are artifice, "pyramids", and the oak and acacia seem to have been mysteriously "suspended". Nature also seems to contrive images in the well: each reflection "loves its portraiture", and at least one thing reflected, the "painted bird", seems itself a mysteriously contrived fantasy. The suggestions of gloom, mystery and phantom life combine with these images to make the forest seem insubstantial (as well as vigorously natural and real). Furthermore, some of the images which evoke the impression of vigorous natural energy also suggest that there is no precision to the changing forms of life. In part the forest is a continuously changing pattern of indefinite and insubstantial forms. The parasites are movement rather than precise shapes: they are like "restless serpents"; they flow, fold and twine; and, as they are "clothed/ In rainbow and in fire" their shapes are indefinite. The description of the ground beneath the trees parallels the movement of the parasites, and the later description of the grass echoes the same ideas. In this way the forest is suffused with energy, death, strange phantom-like life, and mysterious spiritual beauty. It is nature as luxuriant growth and a half-unconscious, half-contrived ritual which seems insubstantial as well as real. As description it is extraordinary both in its elaborate detail and the scope of the characteristics Shelley finds. But it is not merely

description of a particular scene. Even on this level, the landscape is an invention involving fantasy as well as quasi-realism in order to present a personal response to nature.

Beyond this level of visionary description, the landscape is contrived so that the descriptive detail develops Shelley's discussion of idealism. Of course, he continues to imply uncertainty and equivocation. On the narrative level, the forest is the setting for the Poet's second vision. He gazes into the well, seemingly lost in a dangerous and mindless kind of narcissism. But as he listens to the sounds of nature he sees a vision different from the dream which has led him towards death. The second vision lacks the dazzling, seductive beauty of the dream of a goddess incarnate. It is a Spirit formed from the "grace ... majesty ... mystery" of the visible world, and in his vision it speaks through nature (c.f. lines 479-488). But this vision also fades, it seems probable that his understanding is incomplete, and he remembers his quest for the goddess incarnate and goes on his way to his death. He remembers the first dream as "two eyes/ Two starry eyes" which beckon him; this image is linked with the moment of his decision to choose death, when he remembered the first vision as a dream of beautiful eyes (c.f. lines 330-333). As allegory, the incident seems to intensify the earlier implications that traditional religion and naive pantheism are both unsatisfactory explanations of life, and that the best point of view is a sceptical and uncommitted religious awareness of the grace,

majesty and mystery of life in which there is joy "like childhood laughing". The description of the second vision is a relatively explicit rejection of the naive pantheism Shelley associated with Wordsworth. The Poet gazing into the well, like Narcissus gazing at his own reflection, is a development of the earlier implications that traditional religion is mere anthropomorphism. The comment is relatively explicit: the Poet sees his own reflection

"as the human heart,

Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,

Sees its own treacherous likeness there" (lines 472-474).

His reverie as he leaves the forest also suggests a version of scepticism. Although he leaves to pursue the false dream (perhaps, the false interpretation) which seems to represent traditional religion to a large extent, he is also rather sceptical. Like Shelley, he thinks of the stream and the well as images of the source and nature of life: he says that life is unfathomable, the river has no clear origin or simple reality, and he does not understand the whole nature of life and death (c.f. lines 508 - 514). Of course, one of the most obvious lessons of the two visions is that images are difficult to interpret. The comment in lines 472-474 about the reflection in the well is also as much a statement of scepticism as a rejection of traditional religion. Yet the ambiguity of the narrative and comments leads to a more complex uncertainty.

It is not clear whether lines 472-474 are a complete rejection of belief in the supernatural. Furthermore the second vision recalls the earlier suggestions of a tentative kind of transcendental naturalism, a version of monism, hinting at the existence of a power co-extensive with natural life, and not essentially different although its essence is grace, majesty, joy and mystery.

The forest is an elaborately ambiguous illustration of this complex uncertainty. It seems as much a reflection of reality as the Poet's second vision: it is the first reflection in the pool, followed immediately by the Poet's gazing into the pool, Shelley's comment upon reality and reflection, and the appearance of the second vision. Firstly, it contains tenuous imagery suggesting that the first vision is in part the result of false and self-destructive narcissism and that on this level it is connected with traditional religion. The first flowers are images of narcissism and decay:

"yellow flowers

For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
 Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
 Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
 Which naught but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
 Or falling spear grass, or their own decay
 Had e'er disturbed before". (lines 406-412).

The conjunction of emphasis upon eyes, narcissism and decay is sufficient to recall the possibility that the Poet's

interpretation of the first vision is false and destructive, and to link narcissism more clearly with the vision. When we enter the forest the embrace of the oak and the beech recalls the Poet's rejection of physical passion and the evidence of its effect in the first vision; of course, the setting of valley and bower is the same. The following image also implies that the vision was false: within the high domes of the cedar,

"far below,

Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,

The ash and the acacia floating hang

Tremulous and pale." (lines 435 -438).

Throughout the poem, when the first vision is intended to refer to traditional religion, it is described in terms of the natural heavens (stars, moon, clouds, etc). Therefore, the reference to worship suggested by the domes links with these ideas when Shelley describes the smaller trees as clouds: the tremulous and pale acacia and ash, like incarnate clouds below instead of above the domes, suggest that the vision is untrustworthy, unhealthy and unnatural. The parasites "Starred with ten thousand blossoms" which are like "gamesome infant's eyes" are in part a nightmare image in which the eyes of the vision beckon everywhere in the forest. The idea of childhood love continues the undercurrent of threatening horror and suggests that the vision is a dangerous distortion, the decay of innocent love. The level of distorted nightmare imagery in the soft lawns "eyed with blooms" and with their obscure repetition of

sexual reference also suggests horror of the vision. Of course, the darkest glen of musk rose, jasmine and divine revelation is a direct parallel to the earlier dell "where odorous plants entwine" and the Poet's "inmost sense" was suspended in the web of streams, breezes and revelation of the first vision. Therefore, at the end of the description, the image of "some inconstant star ... twinkling fair" helps to draw together the implications that the vision (as a dream of a divine person) is dangerously false. It also links these implications with the more explicit comments which follow: Shelley says that the second vision is "clothed in no bright robes /Of shadowy silver or enshrining light."

But the forest also shows that the grace and majesty of nature embody mysterious spiritual power. The imagery is consistently equivocal. The "inconstant star ... twinkling fair" is an equivocal, as well as obscure, reference to the supernatural. Furthermore, in contrast with the rejection of dualism, the forest suggests a tentative kind of monism. Like the first vision, it contains imagery about interdependence, mysterious correspondences, and intricate interweaving of being. There seems to be love between all things in the forest and also mysterious continuity of being. To a large extent, it is a repetition of the earlier image of the "sinuous veil" or "web/Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues" (of wind, streams and song). It is first described as a "woven grove", "With

the breeze murmuring in the musical woods" (lines 401 - 403), and is continually referred to as an elaborately and mysteriously interwoven pattern. It is a place of "mingled shade" (1.422), "implicated leaves" (1.426), "woven leaves" (1.445) and "woven boughs" (1.459). The pattern is described as a "net-work" (1.446) and a "foliated lattice" (1.465). The interweaving is often of things in love: the most obvious example is the image in which the parasites "twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs /Uniting their close union". As in the first vision (and Mont Blanc) the intricate and tenuous convolutions of the imagery, and the repetition of forms and images, work as mimetic reflection which complements the implications that there is a universal reality underlying the multiplicity of visible natural reality. However, as it does throughout Alastor, the imagery suggesting monism links with implications about uncertainty. Of course, the forest is a brief interlude before the Poet's death at the edge of the "immeasurable void" into which the stream of life disappears. The entrance is "A little space of green expanse" (1.405) as if the hope of even precarious understanding is small. The emphasis upon darkness is obvious (and stressed at the beginning of the description). The forest promises revelation only of "lovely mystery" in "one darkest glen"; and the well, which is a fountain and a well, is translucent and gleaming but also a dark depth. The well feeds the river of life, but its depths are hidden and it is from "secret springs" (as in Mont Blanc) that

the "dark fountain" rises (c.f. lines 478-479). Shelley links the idea of power within man and the universe with the idea of impenetrable mystery. Therefore, the images of intricate and elaborately woven pattern suggest that the pattern is too insubstantial and imprecise, that it eludes understanding. At the entrance to the forest, the boughs and leaves "Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path". There is a relatively explicit comment about this after the illustration of the intricate, constantly changing, and dream-like patterns of the parasites:

"the woven leaves

Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,

And the night's noontide clearness, mutable

As shapes in the weird clouds." (lines 445-448).

Even more clearly than the earlier parts of the poem, the images stresses that life is a vision in which meaning is obscure and insubstantial. This theme is intensified by the continuity of ideas and images in the description of Silence and Twilight which "sail among the shades,/ Like vaporous shapes half seen". As in the first vision, the obscurity and fantasy in Shelley's style seem intended as a mimetic reflection of the obscurity of life's weird pageant of shapes. Furthermore, at the end of the description of the forest, there is a subsidiary use of mimetic obscurity of the kind found in Mont Blanc. The intense implications of frustrated understanding are followed by a passage of increasingly intense obscurity. The images reflected in the well are mimetic reflections of the obscure and

ambiguously evocative images of life in general. The star has relatively precise significance; but the "painted bird" is more obscure; and the "gorgeous insect" is a further progression into obscurity. Yet, as in the third section of Mont Blanc, these images are not completely meaningless. The well which is "Dark, gleaming and ... most translucent" and "Images all the woven boughs" of the forest, like the imagery of intricately woven forms, helps to recall Shelley's linking of life and poetry, and to remind us that Alastor, like the well, is intended as a microcosm. Therefore, the "painted bird sleeping beneath the moon" links with the previous suggestions of artificiality within the forest. As the moon throughout the poem is connected with the supernatural and vision, the image suggests dissatisfaction with all images, and that poetic artifice is barren as vision, perhaps even unequal to the task of reflection of reality as a mere parade of mysterious phantom shapes. The final image seems to continue these implications; but it is extremely obscure and also suggests other ideas. In this way the forest finally suggests that life's meaning is uncertain and that Shelley doubts whether knowledge can extend beyond the self and individual consciousness. In imagery and ideas the forest foreshadows his comment upon the Poet's death, when the Poet becomes "An image, silent, cold, and motionless", in contrast with his life which was "a vapour fed with golden beams", "a bright stream / Once fed with many-voicéd waves" (lines 661-671).

The forest section of Alastor is very similar to the versions of the tradition Winters defines in his later essays. We might say that the physical details of the description live in their context "with a kind of electrical energy". However, Alastor is immature and decadent: the emotions and ideas have many limitations, and implication, ambiguity and mimesis are the main techniques of contemplation. In agreement with Eliot, Leavis and Empson, and by Shelley's confession, there is uncontrolled thinking and undisciplined association of ideas: the major images are dream-like and there is often a level of seemingly unconscious creation, as in the vague sexual reference of the lawns beneath the trees. The mood combines languor, solemnity and ecstasy. The subject shows his characteristic interest in narcissism, decay and horrible destruction as well as spiritual vision. Furthermore, his theories lead him to a dilemma which includes extreme versions of magic, monism and sceptical subjectivism. But, firstly, the decadence of his techniques is far from complete. As we have seen, his elaborate interweaving of ideas and images, to a large extent, is contrived in accordance with his belief that life is an elaborate and obscure pattern of images. The early poems are radical (and logical) developments of the Romantic tradition, and brilliant as well as rather perverse. Despite his immaturity, they are brilliant in their scope and vigour of illustration and their elaborate interlinking of illustration and equivocal discussion. Furthermore, he is more aware of the conventions of rhetoric

and traditions of belief which he departs from than many of the later Romantic poets. Even in the early poems his obscurity and inconclusive radicalism are linked with formal artifice and traditional belief.

Shelley's poetry was never freed from radical techniques and a sense of dilemma. However, there is less concern for mere scope of philosophic reference in the later poems. They deal in a more mature way with the intense awareness of the mystery of majesty, grace and joy which is so important in Alastor and Mont Blanc. Therefore, despite their limitations, they have value as expressions of religious experience. Like Alastor and Mont Blanc, they have been treated with too much contempt by the critics influenced by Eliot's early opinion of Shelley.

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27. Grabo, C.: op.cit. p.91; p.105.
28. Grabo, C.: op.cit. p.26; p.30; p.123.
29. Pulos, C.E.: op.cit. pp.40-60.
30. C.E.Pulos tends to suggest that Shelley was an orthodox follower of Hume; thus he obscures the complexity of Shelley's ideas.
31. In these years he became an enthusiastic reader of John Frank Newton's writings upon Orphic myths and their relevance to the present cf. Woodman, R.G.: "Shelley's Changing Attitude to Plato" Journal of the History of Ideas (Vol. XXI, No. 4).
32. Pulos, C.E.: op.cit. p.37.
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34. Ibid. p.295.

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38. Ibid. p. 319

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44. cf. Pulos, C.E.: The Deep Truth

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45. cf. p. above. Grabo was convinced of "the genuinely great importance of Shelley as a thinker" (The Magic Plant p. VIII).

46. Grabo. C.: The Magic Plant p. 127

47. Ibid. pp.146-147.

48. Ibid. p.151

49. Leavis. F.R.: Revaluation (Chatto and Windus, London, 1936)
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50. Ibid. p.216

51. In Leavis's early essays there is urgent propaganda about the failure of modern civilization and the loss of tradition (cf. Leavis, F.R.: For Continuity (The Minority Press, Cambridge, 1933) p.44; p.168). This propaganda includes praise of the rural worker of the past which might well be described as a modern version of Rousseau's ideas about Nature as a teacher of natural man (cf. Leavis, F.R. and Thompson, D: Culture and Environment (Chatto and Windus, London, 1933) pp.1-2; pp.69-76). This kind of naturalism is connected with Leavis's demand for realistic description and "actualization" and "equilibrium" (cf. Leavis, F.R.: For Continuity p.115; pp.124-125; Leavis, F.R.: New Bearings in English Poetry (Chatto and Windus, London, 1942) p. 206; p.209).
52. Leavis, F.R.: Revaluation, p.212.
53. Ibid. p.166.
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56. Ibid. p.210
57. Ibid. p.214
58. Ibid. p. 214
59. Ibid. p. 212
60. Wimsatt, W.K.: "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery" The Verbal Icon. (The Noonday Press, New York, 1958) pp.103-116.
61. Ibid. p.110

62. Ibid. p.109
63. The point is well established in American criticism. cf.
Bloom, H.: Shelley's Mythmaking (Yale University Press,
New Haven, 1959) pp. 23-27.
64. Bloom, H.: op.cit. pp.25-27.
65. Bloom uses the argument established by C.D. Locock that
the ravine is the "universal mind", the Arve river is
natural phenomena, and the feeble brook is the "individual
mind" (cf. Locock, C.D. ed.: The Poems of P.B. Shelley
(2 vols. Methuen, London, 1911) 2, pp.489-490). This
argument is followed by most critics (for example,
Vivian, C.A.: "The One"Mont Blanc"" (Keats - Shelley Journal
4. Winter 1955, pp.55-65); Wasserman, E.: The Subtler
Language (The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, (1959),
pp. 207-210)). However, Peter Butter in his study of
Shelley's imagery refers "its" to the first line (cf.
Butler, P.: Shelley's Idols of the Cave (University of
Edinburgh Press, Edinb. 1954) pp.118-122).
66. The case for philosophical certainty is argued by Harold
Bloom (cf. Shelley's Mythmaking : pp. 25-27).
67. Kapstein, I.J.: "The Meaning of Shelley's "Mont Blanc" "
P.M.L.A. 62 (1947) pp.1046-1060. cf. also:
Butler, P.: op.cit.
68. Wasserman, E.: op.cit. p. 204
69. That is, although Wasserman does not supply the references,
he argues with the comments by C. Grabo in The Magic Plant

and the argument by C.E. Fuleo in The Deep Truth about Shelley's scepticism.

70. For example, Harold Bloom defines the supernatural in terms of I-Thou mythopoeia, a theory opposed in more detail in later discussion (cf. Shelley's Mythmaking, p. 23).
71. Wasserman, E.: op.cit. pp.206-207.
72. cf: Hughes, A.N.D.: The Nascent Mind of Shelley (O.U.P. London, 1947) p. 250.
James, D.G.: The Romantic Comedy (O.U.P. London, 1963 - first published 1948) p.76.
Bloom, H.: op.cit. p.22
73. Earl Wasserman also points out the ambiguous reference of the simile and that the Arve in the second section is natural phenomena, the mind, and Power. (cf. The Subtler Language, p..214-215).
74. In rather different terms Wasserman also says that the second section is an emblem of the universe (cf. The Subtler Language, p. 212-213).
75. In contrast, Wasserman argues that the lines are firmly based upon philosophical monism derived from Hume (cf. The Subtler Language. p. 215).
76. Leavis, F.R.: Revaluation. p. 206.
77. Empson. W.: Seven Types of Ambiguity. (Penguin edition, 1961).
78. Ibid. p. 247
79. Ibid. p. 145
80. Ibid. p.256 . He was aware that he did not discuss

value in detail, but this does not make his confusion and limitations less troublesome (cf. Ibid. p. XIII; p.7; p.247).

81. Ibid. pp.153-154.
82. Ibid. p.160-161.
83. Ibid. pp.165-166.
84. Ibid.pp.160-161.
85. Ibid.
86. Wasserman, E.: op.cit. pp.216-218.
87. Empson, W.: op.cit.
88. Hough, G.: Image and Experience pp. 24-26.
89. Winters, Yvor: In Defense of Reason (The University of Denver Press, 1947).
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90. Winters, Y.: In Defense of Reason. pp.18-19.
91. Ibid. p.22
92. Ibid. p.11
93. Ibid. p.367
94. Ibid. p.54
95. Ibid. p. 50
96. For further complaints of the same kind about Shelley cf. In Defense of Reason p.85; p. 93.
97. In Defense of Reason p. 70.
98. Ibid. pp.71-74; 92-93.
99. Ibid. pp. 92-93.

100. Ibid. p.75
101. Ibid. p.46
102. Ibid. p. 29
103. Rochester seems to be more complex than Winters suggests; but this does not add to his argument (cf. the contrast between Winters: In Defense of Reason pp. 24-25 and Pinto, V. de Sola, ed: Poems by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1964) pp.XV-XL).
104. Winters, Y.: In Defense of Reason.pp.19-21.
105. Winters, Y.: The Function of Criticism. p. 59.
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CHAPTER II.PART I.

(1)

Whereas the modern tradition of disapproval may be referred to Eliot, the contrasting tradition of admiration and enthusiasm for Shelley may be referred to Yeats, although there is often no evidence that he is an important influence. In contrast to Eliot's condemnation of emotionalism and heresy, the second tradition praises the intensity of Shelley's emotion and admires his attitude to religion as evidence of true spiritual vision. Yeats dedicated himself to Romanticism and magic and this is reflected in his criticism of Shelley. Yet even in his work there is confusion about the Romanticism of the early nineteenth century. In later criticism, in particular the favourable criticism of the 1930's, there is often worse confusion about Romanticism and the nature of poetry.

The main sections of the discussion of the second tradition deal with the critics in historical order. Discussion of Shelley's work is restricted to the poems of 1818-1820, with most attention paid to interpretation of Prometheus Unbound.

(2)

The conclusion of The Sensitive Plant states ideas which are either explicit or implicit in all the later poems. Shelley says that in life "nothing is, but all things seem /And

we the shadows of the dream" (l.124-125). As in Alastor and Mont Blanc, human understanding is subject to illusion and obscurity. The later poems are often elaborate in structure and often contain elaborate theories about man and the universe. But they also show greater structural control and greater clarity about fundamental issues in belief. Although Shelley continues to suggest radical and extreme theories, he is more certain that he will never attain final answers to his questions. He can never be more than tentative; but he tends to state the facts most relevant to his questions and what seem to be the best answers. At the end of The Sensitive Plant, he says:

"For love, and beauty, and delight.

There is no death nor change: their might

Exceeds our organs, which endure

No light, being themselves obscure." (l.134- 137).

Both the immediate meaning of the stanza, and the further meaning supplied by the context, suggest the paradox of certainty in spite of uncertainty, that the poem is an assertion of truth in spite of his belief that fantasy and uncertainty are unavoidable. He has said that he will entertain the pleasant fantasy, or pleasant mockery (cf. lines 126 -129), that the garden and the fair lady "In truth have never passed away" (l.132). He contrives that we consider a beautiful dream: the garden, both spirit and form, remains without change. However, the immediate meaning of the stanza (and the ambiguity of the first two stanzas of the conclusion) suggests that this

is intended as more than an indulgence of delight. He asserts the importance and reality of love, beauty and delight in spite of the obscurity of our understanding. In the same way, throughout the later poems, there is clear statement of both sceptical doubt about human knowledge and an agnostic desire to express and celebrate love, beauty and delight. To a Skylark begins with celebration of joy which suggests incarnation (the meaning of the line has become dull with mechanical familiarity): "Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!"; but the hymn to love and joy stresses the uncertainty of human knowledge:

"What thou art we know not;" (1.31).

"Thou of death must deem

Things more true and deep

Than we mortals dream" (1.82-84)

In the same way, in the Hymn of Pan, we hear first Pan's "sweet piping" of "the daedal Earth,/And of Heaven" (1.26-27). The piping seems to be an epic song of joy about "Love and Death and Birth". But it changes and Pan sings:

"I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed.

Gods and men, we are all deluded thus! (1.31-32).

He sings of life as being subject to fantasy which seems the negation of joy. Of course, this combining of religious joy and sceptical doubt is present in Prometheus Unbound as well as the shorter poems written in the same years. Prometheus Unbound is Shelley's most thorough development of these ideas. It

contains as a basic belief the idea that the meaning of life is unfathomable. When Demogorgon is questioned by Asia about the nature of reality, he replies that the universe is unfathomable, an "abysm" which does not "vomit forth its secrets"; "a voice is wanting" and there can be no final explanation of reality(cf. Act II Sc. IV 1.114-116). He seems to mean that it is useless to attempt to explain "Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change". However, his speech is ambiguous and paradoxical. He also suggests that the "abysm" has important secrets. His statement, "the deep truth is imageless", suggests the same kind of ambiguity: there is perhaps a profound truth; on the other hand, it seems that perhaps there is no truth. He suggests that man must live by the hope that his images correspond to a truth beyond his knowledge. In accordance with this, although he knows that certainty is impossible, Demogorgon asserts that Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change rule "All things ... but eternal Love." Asia's comment upon this reply states the same paradox. She says that "of such truths/Each to itself must be the oracle" (1.122-123). The concept "truths" is as equivocal as in Demogorgon's speech. Knowledge is oracular; but each prophecy is no more than a hope. Thus hope seems the true meaning of human endeavour, faith and joy. Asia then completes the paradox and creates religious faith out of sceptical doubt and hope:

"Prometheus shall arise

Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world"

(Act II Sc. IV. 1.126-127).

This paradox is the central issue in Prometheus Unbound.

The paradox that hope is faith is a dilemma and accompanied by anguish as well as joy in the poems of 1818-1820. It is also an inconclusive and finally incoherent view of life. However, it is more coherent and disciplined than the form of belief he presents in the earlier poems (in which he is less able to choose one point of view from a large number of alternatives). His more profound scepticism allows him greater freedom to praise joy and human power and to develop elaborate speculations about man and his future. In Prometheus Unbound he sets out a theory of ethics, a version of the Christian code of love, not present in the same way in Alastor and Mont Blanc. As the favourable modern criticism stresses, he writes with freedom and relative clarity about mysticism, apocalyptic humanism, and magic. He has a greater sense of spiritual joy and beauty, more knowledge about the forms of belief which interest him, greater understanding of Platonism, myth and magic, and his obscurer theories are more detailed and more elaborate. But it is most important that his scepticism is also more profound and an integral part of his celebration of spiritual experience. Even the ecstatic intensity of his writing, his linking of Platonic mysticism and magic, and the logical instability of his theories, in many cases seem intended to imply despair and uncertainty. Unfortunately Shelley's admirers tend to misunderstand him and claim that he is dedicated to mysticism and magic. The main problem is that the poems are often ambiguous. In Prometheus Unbound the problem is

complicated by his concern to teach the ideals he holds in spite of his scepticism. Therefore, a brief survey of his sceptical attitude to mysticism and magic, and his characteristic techniques in some of the shorter poems, is a useful preliminary to analysis of the critics and interpretation of Prometheus Unbound.

If we consider the degree of mysticism in The Sensitive Plant, it is obvious that the Plant lacks the fulfilment of love, and communion with joy and love, shared by the flowers. The flowers "Shone smiling to Heaven, and everyone /Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun" (l.64-65). But, although the Sensitive Plant felt great love, it could not experience direct and immediate communion:

"For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the Beautiful!" (l.74-77).

The images are ambiguous and often obscure: the Plant suggests mankind, the artist, the lover, and so on. However, in the stanza above, it seems clear that "no bright flower" suggests frustrated creativity and lack of communion. The Plant's lack of communion is stressed in the stanzas which follow by the abundant intercourse and freedom in love of everything surrounding it. The winds shower music and suggest unconfined love; the dew lies with the flowers and then laden with their fragrant love wanders unconfined through the sky; and the "vapours of dim noon-tide" suggest the same perfect fulfilment.

In contrast, the Plant's awareness of this is merely "sweet joy to bear" (1.95). At night, the Plant is "A sweet child weary of its delight" (1.112): the weariness seems to be in part that delight is imperfect. In the same way, the Plant's dreams contain echoes of the "Elysian chant" of the nightingale; in contrast, the other dreams are "an ocean of dreams without a sound" (1.103) and suggest profound communion with love and beauty. Of course, the Plant does have delight and beautiful dreams. Despite his more profound scepticism, Shelley is still inspired by visionary idealism and desire.

The Hym of Pan is an interesting example of his attitude to visionary inspiration and magic (and the complexity of ambiguity he achieved). It also shows his characteristic use of Greek myth. It refers to two myths: the contest in song between Apollo and Pan when Tmolus (cf. 1.11-12) at last decided against Pan; and the story which links Pan's pipes (the syrinx) and unfortunate love, Pan's pursuit of the nymph Syrinx who became a tuft of reeds. Shelley interprets both myths as parallels to parts of his version of the Promethean myth. Pan's lament is also reminiscent of the story of the unfortunate Poet in Alastor. However, Pan says that he "pursued a maiden and clasped a reed" and suggests clearly that visionary joy is incomplete and never free from illusion. Pan and Syrinx become ambiguous images suggesting equally uncertain reality for human passion, the daedal Earth and Heaven, and desire for the infinite. The obvious meaning

of the final lines is that human life is beautiful in spite of imperfection; mortality and passion give it a special beauty which might even be envied by Apollo (we seem intended to remember Apollo's unfortunate love adventures as well as Syrinx). At this point, The Sensitive Plant is a parallel. The Plant also "Received more than all, it loved more than ever" (l. 72) and was "The feeblest and yet the favourite" (l. 113). But Pan's final lament suggests another meaning:

"It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed:
All wept, as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings." (l. 33-36).

The reed breaks as well as the mourning for lost and unattainable fulfilment. The sorrow of the song is that it is an imperfect embodiment of joy (as well as that his joy is the beauty of imperfection). Poetry seems to lack magic power. However, in contrast, in the first two stanzas the song does cast a spell of love (cf. lines 21-22; 28). Therefore, we tend to assume that Pan has turned from visionary incantation to the delusions of mortality. But Shelley also stresses at first that Pan merely invokes desire in the flesh; and Pan only becomes a relatively clear image of spiritual desire in the last stanza. A full reading of the poem would demand comment upon further ambiguities and Shelley's sense of tragic suffering. However, it seems clear that he praises visionary magic as an ideal and also laments that it is useless. The

Letter to Maria Gisborne (1820) is written in a rather different mood but shows the same relationship between magic, hope, and his sceptical definition of reality as illusion and fantasy. After a long and light-hearted description of his interest in magic, we learn that the true oracle is Hope - "she speaks of all to come" (l.139). Shelley knows Hope is a paradox:

"But I, an old diviner, who knew well

Every false verse of that sweet oracle" (l.140-141).

And the truth is that everything is illusion and fantasy. He remembers past conversations:

"A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun

Of this familiar life, which seems to be

But is not: - or is but quaint mockery

Of all we would believe" (l.155-158).

The Witch of Atlas (August, 1820), written some six months or so after the completion of Prometheus Unbound, is elaborate, detailed and explicit in its use of neo-Platonism and magic, but contains the same equivocal attitude. Shelley spent only three days writing it. In many ways, it must be considered as an off-shoot of Prometheus Unbound, a repetition of the main ideas and images. It is also a game. In his address to Mary he begs her not to condemn his verses for the reason that they tell no story false or true, and asks her to be tolerant of a "visionary rhyme". He does not mean that Mary should retract

her criticism, but that she should accept the poem in spite of what it does not attempt to avoid. It must be read with belief and disbelief:

"If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
Can shrive you of that sin, - if sin there be
In love, when it becomes idolatry." (1.46-48).

The Witch is heresy. But if she is unveiled there is no sin because there is nothing beneath the veil. His magical religion is desire for a non-existent reality, a beautiful illusion. The beginning of the story continues this paradox. The Witch was born before Change, Time, Error and Truth had made the Earth as it is,

"And left us nothing to believe in, worth

The pains of putting into learned rhyme" (1.53-54).

Of course, The Witch of Atlas shows learning and a relative lack of contrivance. When the Witch is born she is both "embodied Power" and merely a "dewy splendour" (1.78-80). Although magic is the "inmost lore of love" (1.199), it is a ritual without meaning or reality or power. As in the more important poems of 1818 - 1820, faith is hope as it arises from sceptical dilemma.

Shelley's style shows the same kind of development. There is greater maturity of skill in the methods he had chosen in the earlier poems. He is more concerned to establish a clear surface meaning: in most poems he offers what appears to be a relatively clear fable, a number of clear images, and discursive

comments which seem to be conclusive. In Prometheus Unbound there is certainly a profound and effective striving for greater clarity and precision: the larger structural outlines are more precise; the imagery is even more brilliant; and the discursive comments offer more information for immediate comprehension. However, as there is no basic change, Prometheus Unbound also shows greater skill in the combining of multiple levels of meaning, elaborate and evocative figurative invention, and tenuous forms of ambiguity, implication and paradox. Furthermore, he develops his array of images of streams, chasms, clouds, caves etc. These take on the appearance of a personal mythology. But they have no set of arbitrary meanings, nor do they provide an easy way to the meaning of the poems. They are used for many purposes and their meanings range from the most obvious to the most esoteric (although they never seem to be completely private). The structure of the later poems is the result of development in an elaborate and ingenious mind. In the richness of his genius for elaborate and evocative figurative invention, and his concern with sceptical dilemma, Shelley is comparable to Shakespeare (although not an equivalent).

PART TWO

(1)

There are brief references to Shelley throughout Yeats' essays (and many echoes of Shelley in his poems). However,

in 1900 he wrote a relatively thorough study, "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry"⁽¹⁾. In the essays of 1896-1903 (published as Ideas of Good and Evil) he argues for magic and Romanticism. The poet is a magus who attempts "to enchant, to charm, to bind with a spell"⁽²⁾; and symbols are the most important part of poetry, "the only possible expression of some invisible essence"⁽³⁾. His general theory parallels many of Shelley's ideas. Of course, it is an extreme version of the fallacies about form and content, and man and nature, which are so important in the later criticism of Leavis (in spite of his general disapproval of magic and Romanticism). In a more obvious way, his explicit application of magic to poetry and criticism foreshadows the major assumptions of the later critics who admire Shelley as a creator of myth.

For Yeats, a symbol is a unique and important form which embodies universal reality. At most times, emotion and the "spiritual flame" in the symbol are indistinguishable. Emotions are "certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions"⁽⁴⁾. Emotion and reason are antithetical: a true symbol is "too subtle for the intellect"⁽⁵⁾. Allegory, therefore, is not symbolism.⁽⁶⁾ Conventional rhetorical discipline and discursive clarity are unimportant.⁽⁷⁾ Nevertheless, Yeats asserts that the magus knows a special discipline: "you cannot give a body to something that moves beyond the senses, unless your words are as subtle, as complex, as full of mysterious life, as the body of a flower or of a

woman⁽⁸⁾." But, in theory, the magical work is beyond analysis.⁽⁹⁾ In practice, Yeats derives a number of conflicting and confused standards from this initial contradiction. Thus, although magical power is not unnatural, it must be managed with skill which seems almost superhuman. There are two kinds of form which seem to him most important. Firstly, he assumes that subtlety, complexity and obscurity are connected. He argues that elaboration of outline that approaches formless obscurity is necessary to embody the immaterial: we should never forget that "he who wraps the vision in lights and shadows, in iridescent or glowing colour, until form be half lost in pattern, may ... create a talisman."⁽¹⁰⁾ This is a version of two mimetic fallacies which Shelley often implies: that complexity and obscurity of form are necessary to enmesh the immaterial; and that a complex form wrought from delicate and elusive things is necessary. However, he also suggests that simplicity, sharpness of outline, and precision in structure are connected and important. He derives these standards from Blake and praises his work as "perhaps the greatest art."⁽¹¹⁾ Always his interest in magical form leads him away from understanding of poetry as a verbal structure. His discussion of Blake leads him to assent to Blake's faith in particulars. He returns to the demand that the symbol must be a body with mysterious life, the idea that verbal complexity reflects, and is, the complexity of the physical world. However, in contrast with this, he suggests that poetry should approximate to music, and that music is

perhaps the most perfect kind of symbolism.⁽¹²⁾ The only common assumption in these standards is that magic art must be mysterious and emotional. However, he also demands reason in the greatest art. If the symbol is intellectual as well as emotional, the artist becomes "a part of pure intellect, and he is himself mingled with the procession."⁽¹³⁾ The poet may watch the moon's reflection, then meditate upon the moon as an intellectual symbol and so attain mystical vision: "if one is moved by Dante, or by the myth of Demeter, one is mixed into the shadow of God or of a goddess."⁽¹⁴⁾ Both myth and neo-Platonism are important in his confused application of magic to poetry.

In the essay on Shelley, Yeats' main point is that Shelley was a magus whose life and work seem a portent of a new age of faith in magic. His comment upon Gérard de Nerval is a clear statement of this general attitude to himself, his contemporaries and immediate predecessors.⁽¹⁵⁾ His sense of enlightenment and progress also helps to explain a degree of uncertainty about Shelley. He believes that Shelley had "re-awakened in himself the age of faith"⁽¹⁶⁾:

"he ... seems in his speculations to have lit on that memory of nature the visionaries claim for the foundation of their knowledge."⁽¹⁷⁾

From this point of view, he believes that Shelley was a magus writing in more than usual isolation and without guidance from

the past, a magician whose art developed from spontaneous personal experience. But he was also aware of Shelley's interest in Plato and neo-Platonism. His illustration of Shelley's probable knowledge of Porphyry and the parallels between passages from The Witch of Atlas and Porphyry's description of the cave of Odysseus (as it was translated by Thomas Taylor) is extremely important in the history of Shelleyan scholarship.⁽¹⁸⁾ In fact, Yeats stresses Shelley's learning. He also comments upon a "more and more deliberately symbolic purpose⁽¹⁹⁾", in part contrivance of increasingly "elaborately described" and elaborately meaningful symbolism.⁽²⁰⁾ But he does not develop this line of argument. His idea that Shelley was an untutored genius seems stronger than any other. His involvement with experiments in practical magic (spiritualism etc.) causes further confusion. He seems to have practical magic in mind when he says:

"His early romances and much throughout his poetry show how strong a fascination the traditions of magic and the magical philosophy had cast over his mind ... though I do not find anything to show that he gave it any deep study.⁽²¹⁾"

Yeats repeats his pattern of self-contradiction. He suggests that Shelley developed, according to natural law, from instinctive, unconscious and emotional writing to the highest level of intellectual magic. But he suspects that Shelley lacked complete understanding of magical theory: he is even

tentative about whether Shelley knew that the symbol is an incarnation.⁽²²⁾ On the other hand, he says that Shelley's theory of Love is neo-Platonic, that the ministering spirits in the poems "were certainly more than metaphors or picturesque phrases⁽²³⁾", and that his symbols (stemming from the tradition as well as personal inspiration) were valued for their unique spiritual power. Thus he recognises and praises Shelley's obscurity and the lack of simplicity in his allegory. His comments upon the cave image are characteristic:

"The cave ... may have all meanings at once, or it may have as little meaning as some ancient religious symbol enwoven from the habit of centuries with the patterns of a carpet or a tapestry.⁽²⁴⁾"

He seems to assume that in the structure of his magic symbols Shelley combines the way of complexity and subtlety and the way of clarity and precision. At this point, Yeats' version of Romantic myth reveals further critical confusions characteristic of the tradition. He suggests the paradox that, whereas contrivance is important, too much contrivance is dangerous: firstly, magic symbols are valuable because neither the poet nor the critic can control their significance; secondly, the magician's power is immensely difficult to attain because it must be bestowed by the forces it allows him to control. Of course, the essay reveals the major critical fault of his tradition: it avoids interpretation of particular meanings and substitutes discussion of the theory of the magic symbol (despite the idea

that magic is beyond analysis) for discussion of the poetry.

Nevertheless, Yeats' criticism is extremely valuable. His sympathy with so much of Shelley's work makes him reject the errors of the critical tradition which was later taken up by Eliot. He denies that Shelley was merely "a vague thinker, who mixed occasional great poetry with a phantastic rhetoric"⁽²⁵⁾, and that Shelley was merely a crude revolutionist, a naive disciple of Godwin. His comments upon Prometheus Unbound are profound, although imbued with a neo-Platonic sense of worship. He says that the reformation, or revolution, Shelley wanted was a change to liberty which was "one with Intellectual Beauty, and ... could not come in its perfection till the hours bore 'Time to his grave in eternity'"⁽²⁶⁾. He defines Prometheus Unbound as a paradoxical combining of Shelley's revolutionary ideals and his desire for Intellectual beauty. Furthermore, he suggests the presence of sane qualification: when Demogorgon overthrows Jupiter "visible nature will put on perfection again"; but Demogorgon is eternity.⁽²⁷⁾ In this way, he points to the fact that Prometheus Unbound combines radical visionary idealism (the belief in the achievement of perfection) and stoical scepticism (the belief that the time of perfection is infinitely distant). Too many of the later critics in the same tradition show even less understanding. Of course, Yeats himself makes no clear, explicit comment. Nevertheless, he does return to this issue at the end of the essay; and throughout the essay there is a relevant level of objective doubt about the magical tradition.

Yeats says that Shelley's most important and precise symbol was the Morning and Evening Star which represented his most personal vision of Intellectual Beauty.⁽²⁸⁾ He contrasts this image with the images of the sun and the moon. He believes the moon was contrary to Shelley's vision because she "only becomes beautiful in giving herself" and that the sun was unfavourable because it is the symbol of "belief and joy and pride and energy".⁽²⁹⁾ In an obvious way Yeats is wrong: Shelley does use the moon and sun to suggest the glory of Intellectual Beauty. However, on a further level, his comments are profound. He defines the Morning and Evening Star as an image of infinite desire. (Thus the moon was unattractive to Shelley because "she is not loved by the children of desire"⁽³⁰⁾). He ends the essay with a vision in which Shelley "who hated life because he sought 'more in life than any understood'" wanders "lost in a ceaseless reverie, in some chapel of the Star of infinite desire" and in his reverie voices speak to him of the one image which "would lead his soul ... into that far household, where the undying gods await"⁽³¹⁾. A later reference, in Autobiographies, is helpful at this point; it is a little less figurative:

"No mind can engender till divided into two, but that of a Keats or a Shelley falls into an intellectual part. That follows, and a hidden emotional flying image, whereas in a mind like that of Synge the emotional part is deadened and stagnant, while the intellectual part is a

clear mirror-like achievement.⁽³²⁾"

As criticism of Shelley the vision suffers from the distortion of Yeats' own theories. Ascetic turning to the ideal is not the essential characteristic of Shelley's work. However, it also implies the important paradox that Shelley's desire was infinite because it was never fulfilled and that he worshipped the "undying gods" although he had never been granted admittance into their presence. That is, Shelly was without perfect knowledge and recognised limitations to human understanding. His worship is an attempt to understand something which is never attained, the effort of his mind to hold a "hidden ... flying image". Although Yeats does not explain the vision, he implies some understanding of the scepticism which is so important in Shelley's poetry. Of course, the vision of Shelley's mind attempting to hold a hidden, flying image of the "far household" of the gods is relevant to his brief comments upon the infinite duration of progress in Prometheus Unbound. The conflict between this level of interpretation and his more extreme comments about Shelley as a magician is not unique in his essays. There is scepticism in his own attitude to magic, but it is much less intense and complicated than Shelley's scepticism. Later, in the writing of A Vision, Yeats said that his spirit guides warned him they were less important than his own Daimon and that he thought of his "circuits of sun and moon" as "stylistic arrangements of experience"⁽³³⁾. But even this attitude to magic, although more clearly equivocal than

the essays of Ideas of Good and Evil, is far less complex than the dilemma Shelley explains in Prometheus Unbound and the shorter poems of 1818 - 1820.

(2)

In the preface to Prometheus Unbound Shelley says that the poem has its inspiration in intense experience of joy and beauty:

"The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama."⁽³⁴⁾

There is much evidence of this. In Act II, when Panthea tells Asia her dream, her words are a direct parallel to Shelley's explanation of his inspiration, and she describes a vision of ecstatic fulfilment which is both physical and spiritual:

"his voice fell

Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,

Faint with intoxication of keen joy" (Act II.Sc.I.

l. 65-57).

That Shelley's statement about ecstatic intoxication is equivocal as a version of religious ecstasy should govern understanding of his other comments in the preface about the significance of the poem. His equivocation bears directly upon the discussion about originality, genius, inspiration and poetry which he begins at the mid-point of the preface. He says that genius and inspiration (the "spirit" of genius) are the "uncommunicated lightning" of the mind. Furthermore,

the "mass of capabilities" is a range of degrees of genius which is shared by all: "genius" is in some way the soul or spirit. The poet, therefore, is no exception: all men are poets and all human activity is art. The poet as a writer (and presumably as a man) should study his contemporaries and predecessors:

"As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art ... Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them. (35)"

The comment is interesting as an explicit statement of his concern with mimesis and the possibility of a universal neo-Platonic reality within mind and nature. The "uncommunicated lightning" of the mind is power to reflect the universal reality which is the source of beauty and power. However, the argument is ambiguous and ironic. When he says: "If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated⁽³⁶⁾", he suggests that the poem is a noble mimetic reflection of the source of power and beauty. Furthermore, his meaning is qualified by his earlier equivocation about his immediate inspiration, the ambiguity of the imagery he has used to define the mind, and his use of the term "genius". He has also stated further logical problems. He has said that individual differences are formed by environment and that

the mind is greater than its environment; and, although the mind may change social conditions, we must "excite and sustain" its power. His final comments about didactic poetry being this ambiguity and paradox to a climax.

He admits that he is dedicated to reform. It seems that he wants a world in which society is an expression of genius; beyond this lie the unanswered problems of his definitions of genius and society. He also says that his poems are not dedicated "solely to the direct enforcement of reform". However, the comments about Plato, his own projected history of society, and the importance of reasoned principles of moral conduct, suggest that he has a relatively systematic understanding of reform and human nature. He seems to mean that the poem is not a philosophical and social treatise which deals with precise, comprehensive and extended arguments. His dislike of didactic poetry has the same meaning: "nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse". Yet he also says:

"My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more selected classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. (37)"

Therefore, it seems that the poem contains a special kind of didacticism. It will present "beautiful idealisms". It is intended as a reflection of genius and as evidence that:

"The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored. (39)"

But this is not a conclusive rejection of the philosophy of reality and reform; for example, the phrase "beautiful idealisms" is similar to the earlier phrase "poetical abstractions". Thus the preface seems intended to accomplish a number of purposes; that is, to allow for a number of attitudes to the poem. Firstly, like the preface to Alastor it is intended to placate, deceive and persuade hostile readers. This is linked with more forthright defence of himself, visionary idealism and reform. But the preface is also rhetoric suffused with relatively loosely contrived ambiguity and irony. In this way it is a more honest introduction to the poem: the definition of genius is inconclusive; the conflict between neo-Platonism and reform is not resolved; and although Shelley is fervent about reform he is sceptical about the present condition of man.

(3)

Act I of Prometheus Unbound is a contrast to the obvious levels of meaning in the preface. It teaches a moral code and rebellion; and it reveals a strong sense of present evil and sceptical uncertainty about the nature of genius. In fact, Act I is a relatively coherent exposition of the sceptical

dilemma and sceptical view of hope which is the basis of the poem and which Demogorgon defines at the end of Act IV as the essence of true knowledge:

"To suffer woes which Hope' thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;"

(Act IV: 1.570-574).

That is, hope will fail but we must reject failure; desire is infinite but the ideal is fulfilment. Like the preface, the poem is ambiguous and allows a superficial understanding of Shelley's inspiration and his ideas about reform; but in contrast to the preface at the most profound level it is an elaborate structure concerned with analysis of sceptical uncertainty and its relationship with reform and ideals.

Prometheus himself is the most important image in Act I. Although he is a more successful creation than Shelley's earlier characters,⁽³⁹⁾ in many ways the methods remain the same. Like the poet and the vision in Alastor, he suffers changes of significance. At the beginning of Act I he seems to represent an eternal spirit of perfection beyond man; but he is also man after a fall from original grace; and man as the creator of his own evil. However, early in Act I, the Earth describes him as a "spirit of keen joy" who arose from her "like a cloud/ Of glory" and caused joy to run like "blood within a living frame" (Act. I. 1. 153-158). The imagery

and the ideas parallel Shelley's comments in the preface about his inspiration and the nature of genius. From this point Prometheus is most important as a medium for contemplation of these issues. Even in the first speech of the poem, when the need to establish both the narrative and symbolic levels of the fable seems to cause some trouble, the theme of hope and despair is relatively clear. Prometheus laments: "No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure" (1.24). This is the wreck of hope when suffering and desire are infinite (cf. line 30). Yet, Prometheus is different from those who suffer "barren hope" (1.8). From the very wreck of hope, he creates new hope that Jupiter's reign is finite; when his hope is expressed as love, he is ready for freedom. In structure, Act I is a series of scenes which explore the paradox that inspiration is despair as well as hope, and infinite desire as well as joy.

When the Earth tells Prometheus that she remembers his curse, she links the themes of despair, hope and joy:

"We meditate

In secret joy and hope those dreadful words

But dare not speak them." (Act I. 1.184-186).

But the Earth still reflects the earlier Prometheus who had defied Jupiter with calm hate. Therefore, when Prometheus rejects his curse, she despairs; and her alternate hope and despair become an ironic contrast to the despair and hope of Prometheus. These scenes are followed by the temptations and tortures which must precede the triumph of Prometheus.

Mercury and the Furies are reflections of Prometheus, although they represent two different aspects of his Fall. The usual interpretation follows Mary Shelley: evil is within and man may will its end. However, as Shelley says in The Witch of Atlas, Mary tends to misunderstand the full meaning of his poems. Of course, it is true that Mercury, the Furies, and all the other characters are reflections of Prometheus. But, beyond the more obvious level of propaganda, this means that Prometheus is an illustration of the various paradoxes which compose Shelley's sceptical (and rather stoical) understanding of inspiration, a number of stages in sceptical virtue and evil, and a number of conflicting attitudes to these theories. Thus, Mercury and Prometheus, at the most obvious level of meaning, show man's power and that loss of self-respect is the first step to submission to tyranny. However, they also present the paradox that despair must become hope. The conflict is between hope and the idea that hope has no basis. Mercury says that it must seem that suffering will be eternal. Prometheus replies that the years might be infinite, yet the time will pass: "Perchance no thought can count them yet they pass." (1.424). In this way the scene repeats the paradox of infinite desire and love. Mercury also represents a particular stage of sceptical virtue and evil. He is the earlier attitude which, when the Phantasm of Jupiter appears, Prometheus describes as "such despair as mocks itself with smiles" (1.260). He is the temptation to choose an easy cynicism rather than Promethean paradox, to doubt but refuse the paradox that infinite suffering

must become hope for freedom and joy. He combines evil and apparent compassion and charm. He accepts the possibility of an end to Jupiter's power and his curious array of names for Jupiter add to the suggestion of doubt (e.g. "great Father"; "the Omnipotent"; "thy Torturer"; "Jove"), but he rejects infinite torture and hope.

The Furies are far more important than Mercury. They become Shelley's basic illustration of the terrible despair from which hope must rise. Their infinite desire for hate (which causes them to cry in despair: "We die with our desire"(1.351)) is a complete inversion of heroic despair and desire for love. But they reflect Prometheus when he cursed with "firm defiance and calm hate" (cf. 1.184-186). In accordance with Shelley's sense of paradox, their torture is the temptation to believe that Prometheus, the "spirit of keen joy" which sustains man, can offer only the infinite suffering of infinite hope, love, doubt and desire:

"Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst
for man?

Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever"
(1.542-548).

These lines are relevant to many of the most important ideas and images throughout the poem. The temptation is to accept only one side of the paradox and fall into despair. However,

the Furies tempt with truth. Shelley believes it is true that Promethean inspiration is a spring of "perishing waters" and desire which is never fulfilled. As desire is infinite, those who desire fulfilment for man and themselves "but heap/ Thousandfold torment on themselves and him" (1.595-596).

In the same way, it is true that "Despair smothers/ The struggling world" (1.576-577). The Furies use Christ as an emblem of this aspect of heroism. Of course, Prometheus already knows this; and we have observed his torture and despair. From this point of view, the idea of persecution is merely subsidiary.

Prometheus denies neither the persecution, nor the more important truth, that the persecution arises from the very nature of the "thirst of fierce fever" which he represents. He accepts the truth of the Furies' tortures, and laments as he did at the beginning of the drama: "Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!" (1.635). However, the paradox is that the impossible is to be achieved, the Furies are to be transformed. Prometheus is hope as well as despair. Therefore, his suffering breeds "new endurance" (1.644); and his endurance is desire as hope: as he says at the end of Act I: "I feel/ Most vain all hope but love" (1.807-808). The guardian spirits of the human mind who follow the Furies repeat the paradox with the emphasis upon hope instead of despair.

The "subtle and fair spirits" who arise from "the dim caves of human thought" are images of Promethean inspiration and joy and essentially paradoxical. Although they dwell in the "dim caves of human thought", they "breathe, and sicken not,

/The atmosphere of human thought". Panthea says in answer to Ione that their music is not of the pines, lake or waterfall, but "something sadder, sweeter far than all" (1.671). As Prometheus is man and god, so the spirits are voices of divine beauty as well as natural beauty; and they are sweeter than others because they are Promethean joy and sadder because they suffer most distress about man's failure. Furthermore, they are sweeter because they are the hope of fulfilment and sadder because they are merely desire. At this point Shelley shows clearly that the paradox of despair and hope is governed by the fact that spiritual joy, or inspiration, is clarity and obscurity. Panthea's first description of the spirits is important:

"a troop of spirits gather,

Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,

Thronging in the blue air!" (1.664-666).

The description combines the images of clouds and spring first stated in the preface and from this point repeated throughout the poem. In agreement with the preface, the spirits (and Prometheus) are images of genius, "the cloud of the mind"; and the cloud image is now used for obvious paradox. It seems that inspiration is beautiful and insubstantial, and obscure in spite of its beauty. The spirits' caves are dim, and they are as insubstantial as "fountain vapours ... in scattered lines" (1.667-668). The theme is stressed throughout the scene. When Ione describes the fifth and sixth spirits they have the qualities of both birds and clouds and their song is despair and

love "dissolved in sound" (1,759-762)⁽⁴⁰⁾ Therefore, the refrain of the spirits' song is also ambiguous; it is, when first stated:

"Thence we bear the prophecy

Which begins and ends in thee" (1.690-691).

As inspiration is uncertain, the prophecy is a hope. The songs of the individual spirits stress the same paradox. The first spirit comes from a battle in which a tyrant is challenged; the battle cries are: "Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!" (1.701). The variation upon the refrain states clearly that the prophecy is a hope:

"Twas the soul of Love;

'Twas the hope, the prophecy,

Which begins and ends in thee." (L.705-707).

The song of the second spirit combines a rainbow image of hope and a storm image of evil.⁽⁴¹⁾ The storm is accompanied by a literal wreck; but beneath the sign of hope one man is an emblem of Prometheus and inspired by love. The song of the third spirit returns to the idea that inspiration is insubstantial and uncertain and that Love is Desire. In this song wisdom is "a Dream with plumes of flame" (1.726) and worship of "Desire's lightning feet" (1.734). The song of the fourth spirit is also more complex than has been suggested by the critics who find only Platonism and neo-Platonism. It repeats the ambiguous pattern which suggests that optimism is inseparable from uncertainty. Of course, it does suggest that art embodies the spirit; but also inspiration is untrustworthy and desire is never satisfied.

The theme of desire is continued from the third song. The fourth spirit is like an unfulfilled kiss; it is a dream of love which sleeps on the poet's lips. Therefore, the following lines continue the paradox of beauty and uncertainty:

"Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses
But feeds on the aëreal kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses"

(1.740-742).

The "aëreal kisses" of inspiration are insubstantial as well as beautiful; and the "shapes" are similar to the six spirits and recall the earlier significance of the cloud images. The image of strange shapes haunting a strange wilderness is similar to the imagery of Alastor and Mont Blanc. As in the earlier poems, inspiration is a phantom which is unreal (and even threatening) as well as beautiful. The declaration that the poet creates "Kurslings of immortality!" is ambiguous. From one point of view the idea that images reflect immortality is merely hope as prophecy. The images of reflection are numerous: the shapes which haunt the mind seem to parallel the sun in the lake, and the yellow bees in the ivy continue the pattern of yellow, green and blue. However, in part they add to the impression that reality is illusion; and the poet's vigil from dawn to gloom recalls the previous emphasis upon hope and failure (contrived through images of light and darkness). The fifth and sixth spirits complete the statement about inspiration and are relevant to much that follows in the poem. They are linked with the fourth spirit's song. They are "two shapes",

"Twin nurslings" and despair, love and insubstantial beauty. Their songs show that Love is Desolation. The fifth spirit sings ambiguously about the "form of Love". The comparison "like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses" (1.764) refers both to the fifth spirit and Love.⁽⁴²⁾ It seems that Love is not different from the spirits. The "shape" of Love which scatters "the liquid joy of life" is not different from the previous shapes of inspiration. In fact, Love fades and is inseparable from Ruin. The song of the sixth spirit is even more explicit. Love is man's refuge from desolation, the escape to "Dream visions of aëreal joy" (1.778). The spirits repeat the Furies' message that Love is a delusion and deception. They also repeat the idea that Love is monstrous torture: the aëreal vision is "the monster, Love ... and ... the shadow Pain." (1.778-779). The Furies and the spirits in this way are parallels. Inspiration is Love. But the hope of Love is a monstrous delusion; and Prometheus's love as well as his hate binds him to suffering (because love is unfulfilled desire). Nevertheless, in accordance with the heroic paradox, the final Chorus claims that, although Ruin is a horseman inseparable from love, Prometheus will defeat Ruin:

"Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,

Woundless though in heart or limb." (1.787-788.)

The paradox is complete: Prometheus will triumph although the horseman is beyond harm. The assurance given by the spirits is that Prometheus is the prophecy: of course, Prometheus is as much a paradox as the message and the spirits.

Act I of Prometheus Unbound shows the limitations of Yeats' vision of Shelley lost in some chapel of the Star of infinite desire. It is a complex and ambiguous structure. Shelley combines intense desire for power and reform and sceptical doubt about idealistic hope. The obvious level of idealistic hope and neo-Platonism is accompanied by elaborate ambiguity and irony.

PART III.

(1)

Yeats was followed in the 1930's by a number of critics who defended Shelley against the condemnation of Eliot and Leavis. Unfortunately the first group of critics of the 1930's tends to be less responsible in reading the poems. They repeat the claim that Shelley is a great religious poet and Prometheus Unbound a great religious poem. They also stress the importance of myth and suggest that Shelley's myth presents a vision of ultimate reality. But they show less awareness than Yeats of the uncertainty and contrivance which is so important in Shelley's poetry. C.S.Lewis, Herbert Read, G.Wilson Knight and Maud Bodkin are the main representatives of this attitude. They repeat again and again that Shelley's religious vision was a kind of mysticism and that he is one of the greatest mystics among the English poets: for example, for Read, Shelley is "a transcendentalist⁽⁴³⁾"; for Lewis, he is a Platonist and a "poet of beatitude⁽⁴⁴⁾"; and, for Wilson Knight, his greatest poetry is "transcendental creation⁽⁴⁵⁾". Furthermore, whereas

Yeats' particular interest is magic and there is a direct parallel in Shelley's poetry, the particular interest of most of these critics is Freudian or Jungian psychology combined with some kind of idealism, this is relevant but not in the way of Yeats' magic.

In fundamental beliefs and standards, C.S. Lewis is different to the other critics of this period. In contrast with Yeats, he rejects Shelley's Platonism, and is more concerned with the discipline of his work⁽⁴⁶⁾ However, he says that at their best the poems are myths with "primary appeal ... to the imagination", and that they supply a "long and sustained ... ecstasy" usually only communicated in music.⁽⁴⁷⁾ At present his criticism is useful to stress through contrast the complete acceptance of myth and disregard for technical contrivance of Read, Wilson Knight and Maud Bodkin.

Herbert Read also argues that Shelley is a Platonist and that there is impressive abstract thought in his poetry. However, he takes up the points made by Eliot and Leavis and claims that they are virtues. He praises Shelley because the "highest beauties" of his poetry are "evanescent and imponderable - thought so tenuous and intuitive that it has no visual equivalent: no positive impact⁽⁴⁸⁾." For Read, in art the emphasis is upon emotion. And, in his essay on Shelley, emotion is equated, in a deterministic way, with post-Freudian categories of psychosis: for the most part, he is led to write of Shelley as an unconscious creator of symbols expressive of an

abnormal psychological state.⁽⁴⁹⁾ His assumption for criticism is that appreciation depends upon understanding of, and sympathy with, a poet's personality; and his assumption with regard to value is that poetry must be justifiable "on the basis of psychological truth."⁽⁵⁰⁾ He applies Freud to Shelley and finds "the 'paranoid' type of dementia praecox", and applies post-Freudian research and finds that Shelley is an unconscious homosexual.⁽⁵¹⁾ He then applies the idea of unconscious homosexuality to explain Shelley's subjectivity, his treatment of incest, narcissism, social reform and transcendentalism. In effect, Read's argument is that Eliot and Leavis were correct in their findings but wrong in their attitude. He allows the presence of an abnormal morality, a large degree of unconscious symbolism, and even that the poetry exists "in the suspension of meaning, in the avoidance of actuality"⁽⁵²⁾; and he explains Shelley's evanescent and unconscious imagery as a result of psychological abnormality. However, with the apparent assumption that the mad may provide the sane with relevant rituals, he concludes that Shelley's thorough illustration of a psychotic type has great poetic value. The claim that art is emotion and psychosis seems very inadequate; and Read's argument is naive and illogical. However, his finding of unconscious homosexuality is not altogether irrelevant. There is evidence of paranoid traits in the biographies and speculations about homosexuality in the poetry. But the evidence does not justify the assumption either that Shelley was unaware of these characteristics or that they were dominant and the final meaning of his poetry.

Wilson Knight in The Starlit Dome repeats the claim that Shelley's poetry is the expression of unconscious knowledge.⁽⁵³⁾ He also stresses the presence of images of abnormal sexuality. However, he is inspired more by Jungian than Freudian psychology; and we return to something closer to Yeats' theory. He argues that Shelley is a religious prophet. However, he tends to suggest that apocalyptic hermaphroditism is the essence of Christianity and spiritual experience. A vision of Shelley as a worshipper of the "naked seraph" is substituted for Yeats' vision of the Star of infinite desire. In the same way as Yeats, he considers a number of subsidiary images before he explains the major symbol: he begins with discussion of the dome, the river, the tower and the cave, and explains the "naked seraph" image at the end of his essay. Like Yeats, he assumes that each symbol is an incarnation, that vision is the essence of art and aims to attain "some extra dimension", and that art is prophetic.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Criticism, therefore, is a "decipherment" of the "extra dimension" of poetic vision.⁽⁵⁵⁾ However, for Wilson Knight, Shelley is the poet of achieved communion:

"He is a poet who from the start breathes that rarefied element to which all poetry, semi-consciously, aspires ... he is properly at home only with that end - whether in time or eternity - to which existence is travailling. He is the future, the eternal, the cosmic and spiritual whole."⁽⁵⁶⁾

The "naked seraph" is an image of apocalyptic ecstasy. He

stresses more than Yeats that Shelley's vision is monism with emphasis upon sexual ecstasy:

"(in Epipsychideon) the Eros-experience gives birth to, indeed itself is, a young hermaphroditic seraph-form ... a most valuable development of New Testament doctrine ... incorporating further all that sexual virility necessary today for any revitalizing of the once fiery faith.⁽⁵⁷⁾"

Of course, in contrast with Yeats, Wilson Knight chooses to explain this combination of apocalyptic monism and sex as something relevant to contemporary Christianity. Nevertheless his Christian reformation is not essentially different to Yeats' renewal of the magian tradition. He describes Shelley as a mystic whose apocalyptic communion with the universe as a monad may be contained within symbols which have supra-natural power to repeat the apocalypse and which herald a reformation of achieved perfection in man. And, like Yeats, he ends his discussion with recognition of a paradoxical degree of scepticism. He says that in Prometheus Unbound Shelley admits that he has no "intellectual" explanation of evil and that, in Hellas "the ethic of temporal progress is denied⁽⁵⁸⁾"; thus in Shelley's poetry:

"The message is both psychological and apocalyptic, and Shelley's attempt to bind creative purpose within the temporal order with a strong feeling for the impossibility of an established success except in the eternity dimension - if there - always holds a fine Christian balance.⁽⁵⁹⁾"

Thus he suggests that Shelley's vision is a prophecy of an

uncertain and impossible reality and he links this paradox with Shelley's theories about social reform. His final comment attempts to reconcile apocalyptic monism, Jungian myth, and Christianity and defines the major archetypal moment in Shelley's poetry: "crucifixion as a step to eros-impregnated life - resurrection, espousal, and seraphic purity."⁽⁶⁰⁾ By crucifixion and resurrection he seems to mean change from prosaic life and conflicting awareness of good and evil to apocalypse and the universal monad in which all conflict is transcended; and he implies the re-birth archetype and the idea that it is the form and meaning of religion. It is also possible that he means to refer to the paradox of apocalypse and sceptical doubt suggested by his comment upon Shelley's "fine Christian balance." But he does not develop his suggestions about Shelley's uncertainty, nor does he recognise that Shelley was sceptical about inspiration: for the most part he sees Shelley as the undaunted prophet of the "Eros experience" or "young hermaphroditic seraph-form". Wilson Knight's interpretations are often extremely perceptive; but the value of his criticism is too often merely that it provides indirect understanding by showing the conclusions reached by a mind somewhat similar but unable to do more than project its own belief upon the poems, and committed to a belief which parallels only some of Shelley's theories.

Wilson Knight's early work, The Christian Renaissance (1933) is further evidence of the indirect usefulness of his theories. It is intended as a didactic and prophetic work rather than as literary criticism. It prophesies a renewal of a special kind of

Christianity:

"Herein is our paradisaical naturalism: something pagan, charged with eroticism, tingling with life.⁽⁶¹⁾"

"The divine is ... in art or life, one with humanity." As in The Starlit Dome, the theory is an extreme form of apocalyptic monism: and immortality is apocalypse in the present. Like Shelley, he works with a number of paradoxes. Evil is to be transcended by his god, Eros. Although the divine is humanity, divinity is not yet achieved. He also insists upon the extreme standpoint which Shelley suggests in the preface to Prometheus Unbound: incarnation is eternal human apocalypse and the fulfilment of the prophecy is imminent:

"We can see a Christian Renaissance rising in the near future ... But no celestial avatar need be expected. The time for miracles is past: it always was. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.⁽⁶²⁾"

Although the terms are different, his eccentric prose parallels one side of the Shelleyan paradox. Goethe, Keats and Shelley are quoted as major evidence. In particular, Prometheus and Asia are explained as the vision of Eros: "The marriage union of Asia and Prometheus is our Paradise.⁽⁶³⁾" Furthermore, if we persevere with his eccentricity, as Wilson Knight offers an elaborate and in fact brilliant exposition of this point of view, his prophecies at times are parallel to some of the more difficult parts of Shelley's philosophising, even when he makes no direct reference. For example, he proclaims: "There is no

Hell like a fleeting glimpse of Paradise⁽⁶⁴⁾"; and his vision parallels one level of the vision of Prometheus and the Furies. He also suggests a small degree of scepticism: he says that the Eros vision is "not at all deducible from (the) world and indeed definitely conflicting with it."⁽⁶⁵⁾ However, his theory is a direct contrast to Shelley's concern with reason as well as vision. He denies reason and asserts that apocalypse is its own proof:

"life can only be explained by life: it is incommensurable with pure ratiocination. Poetic creations are ...

extra-dimensional to any conceptual abstractions."⁽⁶⁶⁾

Therefore, as his final prophecy he quotes Shelley's claim that poets are "hierophants of an unapprehend inspiration"; but he shows no understanding of Shelley's full meaning (which is enforced by the sceptical irony of the claim that inspiration is unapprehended).

In Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (1934) Maud Bodkin explains a theory almost equivalent to the faith Wilson Knight published the year before in The Christian Renaissance. Many of her interpretations also parallel Wilson Knight. She writes in a far less impassioned style, and uses the jargon of Jungian psychology, yet despite her apparent critical precision and logic, the amalgam of art, apocalypse and Christianity is the same. Thus, in contrast with Shelley, she rejects reason and accepts emotion and the present immortality of inspiration which, for her, is the Unconscious. The spiritual power of art is "the

Collective Unconscious ... the life-energy ... our common nature in its active emotional phase.⁽⁶⁷⁾" Her vision of apocalypse is also a version of monism in which eroticism is important. She also uses Goethe's Faust as a major example of apocalyptic love: "the faith that in the blind groping and errors of instinctive love some goal is approached ... the Immortal Image of woman, or of man."⁽⁶⁸⁾ And she claims that this vision "appears with fullest power in the Gospel portraits of Jesus Christ."⁽⁶⁹⁾ Like Wilson Knight, she forms part of the tradition in which the poet is a magician and art is power and prophecy.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Poetry becomes ritual and incantation; it is spontaneous reverie; its meaning is neither rational nor contrived; and words "have a soul as well as a sense".⁽⁷¹⁾ She also accepts the extreme paradox of progress and present perfection, and the critical contradictions which follow from it.⁽⁷²⁾ In contrast to her admiration for the New Testament, she believes that poetry shows progress which reaches a climax in Romanticism, in particular, in Goethe and Shelley. In Shelley's Prometheus, Maud Bodkin finds both the culture hero of the pagan rebirth archetype and the Christian ideal of love:

"(Shelley) expressed directly that image of divinity in man which, through a course of development including Christianity, has become part of our social or spiritual heritage."⁽⁷³⁾

But for the most part she refrains from complication of her primary belief that art reveals man as an "inmate of Paradise".⁽⁷⁴⁾

She believes that Prometheus Unbound is a better poem than the Paradiso. The main evidence is Demogorgon's final speech: she says the "love and endurance of Prometheus even in despair" is the essential factor of the image of "God in man ... known to us in ... poetry."⁽⁷⁵⁾ Promethean despair is understood merely in terms of the cyclical pattern of the rebirth archetype. The attitude is equivalent to Wilson Knight's. Of course, her attitude to reason is equivocal. Despite her primary rejection of reason, she accepts the paradox that some poems contain an analytic and abstract codification of the immortal.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Although she accepts that Shelley wrote inspired by Godwin and that this "external" meaning is not important, she says that the poem contains both the archetype and understanding. There is a relation between "the inner and outer reference of the poem's theme". This is an abstract theory:

"steadfast acceptance of suffering for love's sake has consequences beyond itself ... The mystic relation between the suffering and victorious love of Prometheus and the healing of the world is the same relation that thrills us ... in the saying of Christ: I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself."⁽⁷⁷⁾

The combination of apocalyptic Christinaity, meliorism, and a realistic awareness of present imperfection accompanied by a trace of scepticism, is equivalent to what Wilson Knight suggests at the end of his essay in The Starlit Dome.

Nevertheless, in the same way as Wilson Knight, on the whole she

values Prometheus Unbound as an expression of a positive "mystic faith"⁽⁷⁸⁾. Jupiter is Reason or the Super-Ego overthrown by Demogorgon and Prometheus, the Unconscious, which is equivalent to Milton's Satan as he is understood in the tradition established by Blake.⁽⁷⁹⁾ The victory is "Vision's ecstasy" which includes the most primitive forces of love with "no sense of sin or horror" and "in utter surrender."⁽⁸⁰⁾

Writing under the first full impact of Jungian theory, Maud Bodkin and Wilson Knight present a far more naive and extreme version of the magian tradition than Yeats. Their work is remarkable for the extravagance of their versions of apocalyptic monism and the range of their borrowing from a variety of sources. However, although their application of psychology seems wrong, there are many levels of mental activity involved in the creation and effect of poetic symbols: thus the work of Jung (and Freud) is relevant to the understanding of Shelley. In interpretation their main error is to assume that Shelley's myth has beatitude as its most important theme. In contrast, if we follow the development of Act II, the structure is complex and elaborately contrived (within the limitations of his version of inspiration and rhetorical discipline) and the main themes are the interrelated paradoxes stated in Act I. Act II also provides a basis for discussion of Read's theory about the effect of homosexuality on the poetry.

(2)

In Act II there is much which might seem to support the idea that Shelley has unqualified faith in vision. Act II

shows the progress of desire towards fulfilment and each scene and most images reflect this. In Act II Sc. I. we meet Asia, a goddess of desire and love. She knows that fulfilment is imminent: "This is the season, this the day, the hour." It is dawn and Spring has descended. Panthea then brings news of Prometheus in the form of two dreams. The first dream is a vision of incarnation as a form of erotic love. It raises dream to vision and draws upon classical myth: in his strange love-making Prometheus parallels Zeus and Apollo.⁽⁸¹⁾ Asia's reading of Panthea's second dream raises mesmerism to vision of incarnation and beatitude; and Asia's own dream suggests that Nature proclaims apocalypse.

But Act II Sc. I is not merely a celebration of intense joy. In her first speech Asia is "the desolated heart,/Which should have learnt repose" as well as Love when fulfilment is imminent. The imagery is cyclical, moving from despair to fulfilment to despair. As in Act I, despite the obvious level of progress and joy, the result is paradox. Furthermore, the imagery of fulfilment suggests illusion and uncertainty as well as joy. Asia's first speech repeats the previous cloud imagery with the same ambiguous significance.

The image of the Morning Star in Asia's first speech is also ambiguous. Asia knows that Panthea should come with the full dawn when the star disappears:

"The point of one white star is quivering still

Deep in the orange light of widening morn

Beyond the purple mountains: through a chasm

Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
 Reflects it: now it wanes: it gleams again
 As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
 Of woven cloud unravel in pale air:

'Tis lost!" (1.18 - 24).

We begin with the paradox that Asia, the goddess of love, desires the passing of the star. Firstly, Asia's desire is for the sun, for Prometheus and fulfilment. Therefore, when the star disappears and Panthea enters, Asia says:

"I feel, I see

Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
 Like stars half-quenched in mists of silver dew."

(1.27-29).

In part Panthea is the star as desire satisfied. But the fading of the star also suggests the paradox of hope in spite of despair. That the star gleams, wanes, gleams again and fades suggests that inspiration promises fulfilment, then passes and leaves desire. The link with Prometheus and the idea of inspiration is relatively explicit. The star gleams "as the burning threads /Of woven cloud unravel". The syntax is ambiguous; however, the link with the earlier description of genius and joy is clear and parallels the imagery of Act I (cf. Act II Sc. I. 1. 11). The burning cloud threads herald the dawn. But they also suggest the passing of inspiration and recall the earlier implication that Spring, genius and joy are as insubstantial as a dream and as elusive as "the memory of a dream" (1.8). The image of the star reflected in the lake is also

ambiguous (and repeated later in the scene when Prometheus seems to be reflected in Panthea's eyes (cf. lines 114-116; 129-131). The lake reflects the night as well as the star and recalls the image of the "death-worms" (1.16). Thus the imagery and the meaning of Asia's first speech are linked with the songs of the spirits at the end of Act I, in particular, with the major paradox that Love is Desolation and makes men "Dream visions of aëreal joy, and call the monster, Love,/And wake, and find the shadow Pain." (1.778-779). The same theme is repeated when Panthea enters. Asia describes her as "The shadow of that soul by which I live" (1.31). Panthea apologises that she was faint with "the delight of a remembered dream" (1.35-36). But the dream is pain as well as delight: her eyes burn in smiles "that fade in tears". Of course her dream is Prometheus as the song of the spirits, as insubstantial illusion and apocalypse.

The reading of the dreams is an even more elaborate development of the song of Love and Desolation. In the first dream the love of Prometheus is "vaporious fire", "an atmosphere", "the warm aether" and Panthea is "some cloud of wandering dew" (1.73-86). This illustrates Love as the dream of aëreal joy. The second dream is a "shape" whose "rude hair/Roughens the wind that lifts it" (1.122-125). It is "the monster, Love"; inspiration as desire, illusion and torture. However, both dreams suggest the full paradox. The first concludes with an image of fading song which helps to establish that it parallels the song of the spirits (1.87-89): in Act I Panthea has used the same image to describe the passing of the

spirits (Act I 1.802-806). The "footsteps of weak melody" also recall the important image that the Desolation of love "treads with lulling footstep" and "music-stirring motion". At this stage Panthea has forgotten the second dream. She remembers only a vague sense of desolation (1.92). It seems, however, that Ione (and Asia) shared the dreams; and we first learn the second from Ione's questions:

"Canst thou divine what troubles me tonight?

I always knew what I desired before,

Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.

But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;

I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet

Even to desire;" (Act II. Sc.I 1.94-99).

Ione's bewilderment is ambiguous. It heralds the birth of the new Paradise, but is also the paradox of Love and Desolation. Like Prometheus, neither Panthea nor Ione enjoy the full sleep of the time before Jupiter's triumph. This sleeplessness is linked with the worst moment of the torture of the Furies (cf. Act I. lines 539-563). Thus Ione's desolation is also the infinite desire caused by man's lack of "clear knowledge". As Ione says: it is "no delight to wish in vain". And, in place of Prometheus, she makes the lament characteristic of the Romantic tragic hero: "I know not." The speech is a striking example of Shelley's elaborate ambiguity: even Ione's feminine bewilderment is relevant to the passions of such figures as Goethe's Faust and Byron's Childe Harold and Manfred. In this way Shelley more clearly qualifies the love of Asia and prepares

us for her journey to Demogorgon and the fact that this parallels the descent of the Furies upon Prometheus. That is, in Act II we find that in part Asia and Demogorgon are parallels to the Furies as well as Prometheus. As Act II unfolds we become increasingly aware of complex parallels in the events and characters. Shelley follows the progress of Love's triumph and intensifies the beauty of love and diminishes the horror, but contrives elaborate repetition of uncertainty.

When Asia sees the second dream it is Prometheus instead of the monstrous Furies. However, he is at first a "shade" and then the moon instead of the sun; his smiles are a "soft light" and the moon is "cloud-surrounded" (1.120-123). When Asia questions the dream about the certainty of the prophecy, and foreshadows her meeting with Demogorgon, Prometheus becomes both the more terrible aspect of Demogorgon and an image of beauty. He is the shape with "rude hair" and:

"a thing of air,

For through its gray robe gleams the golden dew.

Whose stars the noon has quenched not."

(Act II. Sc.I. 1.129-131).

Despite its beauty, the shape is a phantom or spectre: reality again is illusion. The stars seem to promise love: but their love is not quenched. The imagery, therefore, recalls the fact that Promethean inspiration is "a thirst which outran/Those perishing waters"; at the same time, the "golden dew" suggests fulfilment. The subsequent materialization of the dream and the cry "Follow! Follow!" is a dramatic statement.

of the complete paradox that ideal Love is dream and desire, and reality and fulfilment. This dilemma is stressed when Asia and Panthea remember how the dream first appeared. When it re-appears we find that Love, the monster, leads Asia out of the valley. Panthea's dream is a cycle of fulfilment and ruin, ending with the paradox that ruin is hope:

"all the blossoms were blown down;

But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells

Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,

O, Follow, Follow!" (Act I. Sc. II. 1.138-141).

The imagery links the idea of love as a terrible dream and the love of Prometheus. The image of Apollo and Hyacinth recalls the mythology of the first dream (The final version of the dream is Echo). The dream also implies prophecy is hopeless desire. Clouds vanish imprinted with hope. The same message is on the flowers and plants:

"And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,

The like was stamped, as with a withering fire."

(1.154-155).

This is a joyful prophecy of the fulfilment of love. But the Promethean fire ruins the flowers and seems to be "withering" itself. In contrast to Asia's first version of the dream, "Heaven's dew" has fallen. The combination of fire, water and ruin images suggests again that desire is an unquenchable thirst "kindled" by "perishing waters". When the dream re-materializes, it is unseen and merely a song which fades, returns, and fades again in the same way as the star at the

beginning of the scene. Therefore, in lines 167-170, desire and fulfilment are both real. The dew fades but Asia and her sister are Oceanides and promise infinite quenching of the Promethean thirst of infinite desire. In the same way, the previous fire imagery contrasts with "the liquid responses /Of ... æreal tongues" (l.171-172) and suggests an impossible union of fire and water. Furthermore, the song urges Asia to follow into a realm of sleep and dream "By the odour-breathing sleep/Of faint night flowers":

"While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,

Child of Ocean." (Act II. Sc.I.1.185-187).

Act II is the dawn of a new day and a joyful and horrible dream. The image of the "gently falling feet" of Love is linked with the "liquid responses" of the spirits and the major image in Act I of Love "Scattering the liquid joy of life" with footsteps of light (cf. Act I. lines 766-768). Also as Love passed "hollow Ruin yawned behind". Asia seems to be falling into a world of ruin as well as love. The spirits urge her to leave the valley for "the caverns hollow":

"the rents, and gulfs, and chasms
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted"

(Act II. Sc. I. 1.203-205).

Desolation also "treads with lulling footstep" (Act I. 1.774). Thus Shelley stresses that Love is Ruin. It seems probable that in part Act II should gain dramatic impact from the ironic

reversals of Asia's journey: she journeys to Demogorgon instead of to Prometheus; and, although she is the Form of Love, she asks questions which are uncertain as well as prophetic. Thus Act II shows that the secret Mercury wanted is that, as Demogorgon, Prometheus is the monstrous, hollow ruin of love and the paradox that prophetic hope will triumph.

Act II Sc. II is similar to the first scene. However, in Act II Sc. III and Act II Sc. IV Shelley makes his uncertainty more explicit; and in Act II Sc. IV he makes some changes in his techniques. In the previous scenes he insists upon the triumph of Prometheus, and uses elaborately ambiguous symbolism to imply his uncertainty. In Act II Sc. IV scepticism is taught by relatively unequivocal generalizations. Asia suffers from this. At times Shelley fails to reach a balance between her knowledge as a goddess and her human uncertainty. In Act II Sc. IV, Shelley's ambiguous discursive writing also suffers from its characteristic weaknesses of bathos and eccentric diction. Furthermore, in both Act II Sc. III and Act II Sc. IV (as in Act III), there are failures in the dramatic level of the narrative.

From one point of view, the paradox that triumph must arise out of fathomless uncertainty means that beauty is horror. Therefore, Shelley shows more clearly that Asia and Demogorgon are linked with the Furies. In Act II Sc. III Panthea describes Demogorgon's cave as the origin of the "oracular vapour" which men call truth, genius, or joy, the "maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain" and then cry out like Maenads in

"The voice which is contagion to the world" (1.5-10). Thus Panthea links Demogorgon, Prometheus and the Furies by repeating the imagery and ideas of the Furies' claim that Prometheus kindled a third he could not quench. As Panthea repeats the Furies' message and makes the first statement of the image of the strange and terrible Maenads, we should understand that the Oceanides are also in part the Furies. Asia suggests this and links herself with Demogorgon when she describes herself in images reminiscent of Panthea's second dream, the aëreal phantom whose "rude hair /Roughens the wind that lifts it". She is surrounded by tremendous and terrible noise: "a howl of cataracts ... the rushing snow ... The sun-awakened avalanche" (1.31-38). The noise seems reminiscent of the Maenad's cry of contagion, and Asia cries out against it:

"The fragments of the cloud are scattered up:

The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;

Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; "

(Act II Sc. III 1.47-49).

The image also recalls the earlier descriptions of the Furies. When they first appear the Furies are "those with hydra tresses" and are "Like vapours steaming up behind,/Clanging loud" (Act I. 1.326-330). The present landscape also parallels the Furies' Hell. Asia and Panthea are standing on a pinnacle of rock. But in Act II Sc. I they had set out to travel down "Through caverns hollow" (Sc. I. 1.178; 197) and the pinnacle is within a deep valley where the Earth mourned the fall of Prometheus (Sc. III 1.28-30). The pinnacle (which is hollow and

the cave of Demogorgon) is surrounded by a "sea of ... crimson foam" (Sc. III 1.43-44) and is like a volcano (Sc. III 1.13). In the same way, the Furies are "vapours steaming up" from Hell and live in "towers of iron,/And gnash, beside the streams of fire" (Act I 1.344-345). Therefore, the Spirits who rise within the mist and seem as numerous as the "endless crowd" of Furies (Act I 1.330) are reminiscent of the Furies as well as the benevolent guardians of the mind. Their song, so often praised as an expression of Shelley's unambiguous Platonism, implies the paradox that Love is despair and desire at the same time as it heralds the triumph of the risen Prometheus. The second stanza is the most obvious statement of the paradox. Asia is to follow the Spirits as inevitably "As the fawn draws the hound". The image is a direct link with the Furies who are "Hounds /of Hell" (Act I. 1. 341-342) and use a number of images similar to the following:

"as lean dogs pursue

Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live"

(Act I. 1. 454 -456).

Within the lyric the fawn and hound image is ambiguous. As Asia is Love, it seems that she is the fawn and the Spirits are like the Furies; as the Spirits are drawing Asia to them, she is the Furies. The effect of the ambiguity is to recall that love is desire and hope in spite of despair. For Shelley, as a scientific reference, the next line is ambiguous.⁽⁸²⁾

The counterpointing of fawn and lightning, and hound and vapour

also complements the ambiguity of the previous line. Asia seems to be lightning caused by the hellish vapours of the Furies (as lightning results from electrical clouds). Lightning is closely associated with Jupiter, Mercury and the Furies (whose second appearance (Act I. lines 431-434) is heralded by lightning). Of course, Asia is also the cloud of inspiration attacked by Jupiter (as Shelley believed that lightning caused rain). In the next line Asia is both the moth burnt by the taper of infinite desire, and the fire of love triumphant (as she is in the later lyric, "Life of Life"). The final lines of the stanza are an explicit comment upon the paradoxes of despair and prophecy and love and desolation.

In Act II Sc. IV the cave setting and a number of other images suggest that the interview between Asia and Demogorgon is a parallel to the classical myths of sacrifice and re-birth in which a beautiful woman is sacrificed to a monster and a hero defeats a monster. Asia has travelled a labyrinthine path to the cave and the Furies have earlier reminded Prometheus that they are "foul desire round thine astonished heart,/ And blood within they labyrinthine veins" (Act I lines 489-490); therefore, we are reminded of the minotaur and the other monsters of the same kind.⁽⁸³⁾ Of course, Prometheus himself is a sacrifice. Later Hercules unbinds Prometheus. Act II is a Death and Birth for Asia and parallels the fall, monstrous torture and triumph of Prometheus in Act I.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Shelley now stresses the link between Demogorgon and the Furies. Demogorgon is "a mighty darkness ... and shapeless" (Sc.IV.1.2-6)

and the Furies are "shapeless" as their "mother Night" (Act I. 1.472). He is the eternal master of the abyss and the Furies are "hollow underneath, like death" (Act I. 1.442). He is the "terrible shadow" (Sc.IV 1.150) and the Furies define their shape as "the shade" of their victim's agony (Act I. 1.470-471). When he rises to ascend his chariot, he floats "as may the lurid smoke/ Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea" (Sc.IV. 1.151-152), an image paralleled a number of times in the Furies' tortures. Therefore, he is in part the monster, Love, the fact that "hollow Ruin" is "Love's shadow". Asia's questioning of Demogorgon insists upon the reality of ruin as well as love. She says that the "sense" of Spring and love is imperfect and combines sadness and joy even before it inevitably passes and brings complete desolation (Sc.IV lines 12-15). Her next question defines life as Hell: Pain which is "howling and keen shrieks, day after day" (Sc IV 1.26-28). Her questions are followed by her history of Heaven and Earth. The history is an awkward device. It seems intended to link the main themes of the earlier and later sections of the poem; but the beginning causes confusion. It states the paradox that prophecy is hope and prepares for the later sections by outlining the various kinds of human power and knowledge. But Shelley's passionate dislike of orthodox Christianity and his re-writing of Christian myth distracts attention.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Furthermore, in order to prepare for the triumph of Prometheus, the history begins as if knowledge and Love are certain:

"There was the Heaven and Earth at first /And Light and Love"

(Sc. IV 1.32-33). However, the basic paradox is soon repeated. The Fall is the result of a rightful rebellion rather than a misdemeanour. When Prometheus appears and attempts to quench man's thirst for knowledge and power, Jupiter also appears. That is, man both knows and does not know love. The middle section of the history states the paradox even more clearly. Man is desire, "desert hearts" suffering "fierce wants". He is Demogorgon and the Furies: he suffers "shadows ... ruining the lair wherein they raged." And he is the paradox that Prometheus is Love and merely "legioned hopes ... with thin and rainbow wings." Finally, in an image which should remind us that the legioned hopes are also Hounds of Hell, Asia explains that power is terrible as well as beautiful; the Promethean fire:

"like some beast of prey,

Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath

The frown of man;"

(Act II Sc. IV 1.66-68).

Asia also returns to the theme of suffering and ruin at the end of the history.

Shelley's characteristic power of invention returns when he describes the triumphal chariots. The charioteers are like redeemed reflections of the Furies. The imagery implies the paradox of infinite desire and infinite fulfilment, and implies that fulfilment is impossible, as it describes the triumph of Love. The "hydra tresses" of the Furies have become "bright locks ... like a comet's flashing hair" (Sc. IV 1.138-139). The charioteers look behind as if fiends pursue them, but there are

"no shapes but the keen stars" (Sc. IV. 1.133-134). They are "wild-eyed" like the phantom of Panthea's second dream, but they are far more beautiful. They suggest that desire must be satiated by desire:

"Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it."

(Act II Sc. IV 1.135-138).

This is one of the most brilliant inventions in the poem. It is the paradoxical triumph of the grief of Apollo and the Promethean "thirst of fierce fever". In accordance with the paradox, the pursuit continues: the charioteers sweep onward like comets, in an ecstasy of infinite desire although it seems that fulfilment is attained. The images of wild-eyed thirst and transfigured horror also maintain reference to the reality of failure and ruin. That the charioteers look behind and before suggests flight from desire and ruin. The fiend image recalls the reality of ruin. The "keen stars" are images of unattainable fulfilment. The "rainbow-winged steeds /Which trample the dim winds" are reminiscent of the shadow Ruin which pursues Love "On Death's white and winged steed ... Trampling down both flower and weed" (Act I. 1.780-784). Therefore, Demogorgon's ascent into his dark chariot driven by a "ghastly charioteer" should be clearly ambiguous: it is the transfiguration of horror, the paradox of desire and despair.

Act II Sc. V describes the fulfilment of Asia's journey,

the symbolic union of Asia and Prometheus. The lyric "Life of Life!" sung by a Voice in the Air seems to be the song of Prometheus in celebration of the union. However, as in the previous scenes, Shelley's attitude to inspiration is equivocal. At the beginning of the scene, he stresses that Love is desire. Asia says that her breath would urge the chariot beyond "the hot speed of desire" (Sc.V 1.5). The Spirit of the Hour replies: "Alas! it could not." The lyric "Life of Life" is less successful than the description of the charioteers at the end of Act II Sc. IV. However, as it is often accepted as the essence of Shelley's Platonism, some explanation is necessary. At the very least, it must seem strange either as a song of re-union or as praise of the divine. In the first stanza, Asia inspires desire in her lover, but, although his desire is unavoidable, he asks her to shield him from it. In the second and third stanzas, Asia is attainable and unattainable. In the third and fourth stanzas, the lover only knows Asia through other loves. In the fourth stanza, he seems to approach union with her; but he is only one of many; and for all the sense of ecstasy ends in ruin:

"And the souls of whom thou lovest

Walk upon the winds with lightness,

Till they fail, as I am failing,

Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!" (Act II Sc.V 1.68-71).

Of course, the lyric does echo neo-Platonism, Christian mysticism and even the Petrarchan code of love. However, these references are qualified by constant reminders of the Promethean

paradox. In the first stanza, Asia's lips fire the air, then her smile fades, the lover survives, then faints. Shelley's attitude to inspiration is the same as in Act II Sc. I. The image of lips which enkindle the air recalls the image of the charioteers, the song of the Fourth Spirit, and the basic image of desire as fire and thirst. The rest of the stanza is ambiguous in the same way. The image of the lover fainting entangled in the mazes of Asia's glances recalls the image of Asia's labyrinthine journey to Demogorgon, the measureless and "line through line inwoven" eyes of Panthea which inspire the journey (Act II Sc.I. l.114-117), and the anguish of the "lighted stare" of Christ which was an emblem of the worst torture and made Prometheus plead for respite. In the second stanza, Shelley stresses that inspiration is uncertain as well as that desire is infinite. Although Asia burns with love there is always a screen and, as the morning will not pass, love will not be fulfilled. Earlier in the scene the Spirit of the Hour states the same paradox: "The sun will not rise until noon"; and the present light is drawn from Asia (Sc. V.l.10-14). In the third stanza, the fact that Asia's lover will desire her for ever is ironic. That her voice is a "liquid splendour" which makes her lover "lost for ever" is also linked with the imagery of Love as Ruin and infinite thirst. In the fourth stanza, Asia is the "Lamp of Earth" but there are also "dim shapes". The bright spirits of love who "Walk upon the winds with lightness,/Till they fail" and are "lost, yet unwailing" parallel the image of Love and Ruin in the songs of Act I, and the sages,

patriots and pale youths "who perished, unupbraiding", as well as the Christ emblem. Thus even in the lyric which celebrates the union of the lovers we are reminded that Prometheus is the cause of man's suffering as well as his saviour.

(3)

Act II shows clearly enough that Shelley was not a conventional Platonist and that, as Wilson Knight and Maud Bodkin argue, his borrowing from Platonism is linked with a form of apocalyptic monism. But his understanding of apocalypse is an awareness of present imperfection even in Promethian inspiration: he provides elaborate illustration of apocalypse and reform as they could be understood within the limits of his uncertainty. Act II also shows the elaborate ingenuity Shelley's genius allowed him to lavish upon the contrivance of the later poems. It shows the intricate patterns he used in the main outlines of structure and the later form of his contrivance of multiple levels of meaning and tenuous patterns of luxuriant secondary imagery. It is certainly intensely emotional, even ecstatic, and concerned with the dark fantasies of the mind as well as bright dreams. As Shelley states in Act IV, Prometheus Unbound should be read (and judged) as a Dionysian hymn. But, although the images and some of his theories are similar to the material used in Jungian analysis, they are not primitive or unconscious mythopoeia. The explanation of the apparent similarity is in part that Shelley's knowledge of classical myth was extensive and that his attitude to inspiration was influenced by contemporary discussion of myth (in particular,

the Dionysian cult) which parallels much of the material of Jungian analysis.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Beyond this we might consider the nature of his imagination and personality, the question of the psychological study of poetic imagination, and the errors which may arise in the application of psychology to literary criticism. The error of Wilson Knight and Maud Bodkin in applied psychology is a simple one: the assumption that Shelley's Romantic myth both neglects and transcends reason.

Herbert Read's interpretation of Shelley as an unconscious homosexual is in part based upon the same false assumption. His theory is part of a long tradition of disagreement about the extent to which Shelley was bad and mad. This tradition suffers on both sides from the worst results of prejudice and emotionalism. It is far from unimportant in the contemporary attitude to Shelley's poetry. Leavis, for example, relies a great deal upon vague insinuations about vice and mental disease to discredit the poetry. The best short account of the tradition is Carl Grabo's Shelley's Eccentricities.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Grabo reports a study, The Psychology of the Poet Shelley, by a critic, Edward Carpenter (and a psychiatrist, Barnefield). Like Read, Carpenter claims that Shelley was an unconscious homosexual.⁽⁸⁸⁾ His theories are also like Wilson Knight's vision of the new Renaissance; but they are even more illogical and perverse. He argues that Shelley combined "a great range of qualities both masculine and feminine"⁽⁸⁹⁾ and that in the later poems he envisioned a human type, the psychic hermaphrodite, towards which evolution is in progression. Carpenter believes this

might be a true prophecy and that the new Hermaphrodite will have "cosmic consciousness ... which may also be termed divination."⁽⁹⁰⁾

Grabo shows the lack of logic in these arguments. However, his own essay is also unsatisfactory. Grabo is one of the most important of Shelley's critics in this century. But he is dedicated to the view that Shelley was a great man and a great religious teacher as well as a great poet; and, apart from his enthusiasm for Shelley, the general tendency of his work is normalization. His comments upon homosexuality and Shelley combine ingenuousness and the blindness of extravagant admiration. He says that great artists are sane and healthy, that healthy men find homosexuality "rather horrible" and that, therefore, it was a theme Shelley "did not care to explore".⁽⁹¹⁾

The "average healthy-minded man" is inadequate as a theory of psychology and morality; the idea that the great artist is perfect in all things is also misleading. It seems obvious that Shelley often makes direct and indirect references to abnormal sexual relationships, including homosexuality. For the most part, he writes about normal love, using imagery which is often explicitly sexual. But we should also recognise such obvious examples of abnormality as the incestuous love of Laon and Cythna in the original version of The Revolt of Islam and in Prometheus Unbound the strange relationship between Prometheus, Asia, Panthea and Ione.⁽⁹²⁾

Furthermore, Shelley's classicism in his poems includes attention and some commitment to the Greek theory of love between men. Although he censored his translation of The Symposium, in 1819 (the year he wrote Act II and Act III

of Prometheus Unbound) he translated Euripides The Cyclops in which the drunken Cyclops is seduced by Silenus with the promise that he is the Ganymede of Jupiter. In Act III Sc. III of Prometheus Unbound the Earth describes a temple where "emulous youths" once worshipped before "Praxitelean shapes" in honour of Prometheus (and earlier Prometheus parallels Apollo and Hyacinthus); and this contrasts with Ganymede and Jupiter (cf. Act III Sc. III 1.160-170; Act III Sc. I 1.25-26). Of course, Adonais and the translations from Bion and Moschus show interest in the same Greek customs and conventions. His speculations about homosexuality were wide in their scope.

The fragments of the first draft of Epipsychidion show an intention, which was rejected before the poem was completed, to deal in a relatively clear way with his unconventional theory of love.⁽⁹³⁾ It is from these fragments that Wilson Knight takes the "naked seraph" image, his most important evidence that the hermaphrodite image was used to suggest apocalyptic monism; but he is evasive about their precise significance. Shelley seems to be as much concerned with a dilemma and paradox as he is in Prometheus Unbound. Most critics are aware that in Epipsychidion he begins with a long rhapsody upon the beauty of Emilia before he says that he is opposed to "the code/Of modern morals" because "True love in this differs from gold and clay,/That to divide is not to take away", whereas in the first draft he begins with rejection of modern morals and says it is in "Free love ... that to divide is not to take away". However, it is also important that in the first draft Shelley

makes us uncertain about the sex of his "dear friend" and about the extent to which sex is important in their relationship. He begins with references to both sexes and says that he has secret:

"Here, my dear friend, is a new book for you;

I have already dedicated two

To other friends, one female and one male, -

What you are, is a thing that I must veil"

(Fragments 1.1-4).

He also refers to Socrates and Christ (who "did ... urge all living things to love each other" (1.34-35)) in defence of his theory of free love. In a later section his equivocation is prepared for with the same obvious irony. He says: "If any should be curious ..."; of course, he invites our curiosity. If we are curious, we are to read Shakespeare's sonnets and The Symposium:

"How Diotima, the wise prophetess,

Instructed the instructor, and why he

Rebuked the infant spirit of melody

On Agathon's sweet lips, which as he spoke

Was as the lovely star when morn has broke

The roof of darkness, in the golden dawn,

Half-hidden, and yet beautiful.

I'll pawn

My hopes of heaven - you know what they are worth -"

(Fragments 1.102-109).

And the pedagogues, if they could tell his riddle, would forsake their present teachings; but this would lessen his pleasure:

"Paradise fruits are sweetest when forbidden" (1.116). As he says, he speaks in riddles. Diotima reminds us of the Uranian Venus. But Agathon praised homosexual love; and as Shelley's meaning seems intended to be "Half-hidden, and yet beautiful" Shelley seems to be an equivalent to Agathon. The reference to Diotima is also equivocal: Diotima's theory was heirarchical; it will not answer whether Shelley is "friend or lover". However, as he is willing to forgo Heaven it seems he is a member of the second level, to which Alcibiades belonged. But the riddle has no single answer; in a later line he refers to his "sweet refuge" as Emily (1.170); and in an earlier image he refers to the Hermaphrodite as "that sweet marble monster" (1.57-61). He suggests both heterosexual and homosexual love, and both Pandemonian and Uranian love. Although the general tone seems to reflect Byron's kind of self-mockery, the arguments are drawn from Shelley's own sceptical dilemma. The naked Seraph has the same significance as Prometheus:

"It floats with rainbow pinions o'er the stream

Of life, which flows, like a dream

Into the light of morning, to the grove

As to an ocean ...". (Fragments 1.150-153).

The images are also similar. The Seraph is a mysterious and uncertain inspiration within a dream, perhaps merely a dream within a dream (cf. 1. 142-149). Thus his speculations about homosexuality, like the rest of his theory of free love, and his speculations about magic, monism and human progress, are

offered as possible solutions to a problem which seems ultimately unfathomable. These speculations are interrelated: his interest in monism, apocalyptic reform, and homosexuality forms a logical sequence. But, in each poem, there is a different response to his sense of dilemma, and his speculations have a different order of importance. The first draft of Epipsychidion shows far less faith in hope as prophecy than Prometheus Unbound; and it is the only explicit discussion of homosexuality in the poems. In this way, there is some truth in the theories of both Read and Grabo. Homosexuality was linked with Shelley's basic sense of sceptical paradox; but in the completed poems it is never made a main issue.

Whether Shelley's apocalyptic monism, his scepticism and his interest in abnormal sexual relationships are linked in a process of cause and effect is a question for psychologists and perhaps beyond the scope of this discussion. But it is relevant that the implications about homosexuality are not restricted to the first draft of Epipsychidion and that in Prometheus Unbound they are closely linked with some of his most important images, with his main paradox, and in particular with the theme that Love is horror and ugliness. There are significant similarities between Prometheus Unbound and the first draft of Epipsychidion other than those already mentioned. In the draft of Epipsychidion, at the beginning of the naked Seraph section, the ambiguous cloud image for inspiration is followed by the "Pythian exhalation" image (the vapours which inspire the Appolonian oracle), an image of Love as desire and speed, and finally the

naked Seraph, a spirit hovering above life. As in Prometheus Unbound the swift spirit of Love as desire is linked with "Almighty Death/His bloodless steed". In the draft of Epipsychidion the "naked Seraph" image (of Love as ruin and horror as well as beauty) is linked with the Hermaphrodite, "the sweet marble monster", and the equivocal self-mockery and sexualism of the following boast:

"Perhaps we should be dull were we not children,

Paradise fruits are sweetest when forbidden.

Folly can season Wisdom, Hatred Love." (Fragments 1.116-117)

This is unpleasant writing. It seems in part a poor imitation of Byronic insolence. It is also reminiscent of the pert riddling of the Spirit of the Earth in Prometheus Unbound (Act III Sc. IV); and in many ways the Spirit of the Earth is an earlier form of the naked Seraph. The parallels between the poems suggest the possibility of a further level of significance for the images in which Love is a sweet monster, or a monster transformed, in Prometheus Unbound. The Witch of Atlas serves as an intermediary link. The worship of the Witch by the strange shapes of the cameleopard, elephant and sly serpent is relevant. These strange beasts are followed by a Grecian company who are reminiscent of The Cyclops and should suggest abnormal love without knowledge of Euripides. As well as the nymphs, there is Silenus, "universal Pan", "quaint Priapus", Satyrs, Polyphemes, and "lumps neither alive nor dead, Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed" (1.105-136). Of course, the Witch's companion, Hermaphroditus, is linked with the worship of these strange

monsters; and Hermaphroditus combines the characteristics of the naked Seraph and the hermaphrodite in the draft of Epipsychidion. In The Witch of Atlas Hermaphroditus prompts the comment that "liquid love" may join the "repugnant mass" of fire and snow, as "all things together grow/Through which the harmony of love can pass" (1.321-328). In this case it also seems that Shelley's images of repugnant monsters and their transformation, and the paradox that Love is horror, are connected with an equivocal attitude to free love as universal love, including the hermaphrodite and homosexual. We must now ask whether the same pattern occurs in Prometheus Unbound. As we have seen in Act III Sc. III the description of the worship of Prometheus includes awareness of the Greek admiration of male beauty. With this in mind, it seems important that in Act III Sc. IV, when the Spirit of the Earth describes the transformation of man and Nature after the triumph of Prometheus, there are obvious parallels to sections of The Witch of Atlas. Thus, in The Witch of Atlas the cameleopard, the serpent, the lioness, Silenus and his company, the lumps neither alive nor dead, and "such shapes as haunt/Wet cliffs" (1.89-136) are linked with Hermaphroditus made by love from the "repugnant mass". The pattern of ugliness transformed by Love also occurs in Prometheus Unbound Act III Sc. IV. The Spirit of the Earth first describes the ugliness of Nature:

"Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world"

(Prometheus Unbound Act III Sc. IV.136-39)

He then describes the transformation: "toads, and snakes, and efts" (1.74) become beautiful, although the exorcism involves "little change of shape or hue" (1.77). The final illustration is that the poisonous fruit of evil becomes the food of joy. Furthermore, these images follow immediately after the description of the Grecian worship of Prometheus. Act III Sc. II adds to the significance of the two later scenes. As the first pageant of Love after Jupiter's fall, it balances Act II Sc. V. in which the lyric "Life of Life" celebrates the triumph of Prometheus and Asia. In Act III Sc. III the triumph is celebrated in the idyllic male friendship of Ocean and Apollo. Ocean says:

"Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell:

The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it

With azure calm out of the emerald urns

.

It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm,

Peace, monster; welcome now. Farewell"

(Prometheus Unbound Act III Sc. III

1. 40-50).

The image promises the fulfilment and transformation of the horses and monsters of desire, ruin and infinite chaos; and Ocean and Apollo are equivalent to Asia, the goddess from the sea, and Prometheus, the fire-giver. The image of the transformed monster fed with Love parallels the imagery of

Act III Sc. IV. Thus it seems that an equivocal attitude to the Greek ideas about homosexuality is intended as part of the ambiguous significance of Act III Sc. IV. This level of meaning is rather esoteric. But the fact that few readers are aware of it is caused by careless reading as much as by the extreme degree of obscurity. The equivocal references to homosexuality seem to be contrived and relatively disciplined rather than unconscious and incoherent. However, the idea that they show a failure in rational control and that the subject was a source of mental anguish for Shelley is also relevant. Shelley's attitude to human imperfection in Prometheus Unbound is not merely that imperfection causes suffering, and that evil ruins man. Nor is the solution to his sceptical dilemma merely that imperfection is universal and must become universal perfection. He often suggests that present reality is everywhere a very horrible form of evil and that Love must rise out of ugliness and horror. In Act III these suggestions are closely connected with his speculations about the relevance of homosexuality to universal love. Prometheus Unbound is not a philosophical treatise; but it is a definition of reality. Therefore, it is a failure of discipline and control that something of the attitude of Grabo's "healthy-minded man" to homosexuality seems closely connected with his concern with ugliness and horror and that he fails to make a clearer comment upon the various differences between the two themes. If we turn to psychology, and consider this aspect of Prometheus Unbound along with the references to the same subject in the

other later poems and translations, it begins to seem probable that his equivocal interest in homosexuality was an important cause of his sense of anguish. But it would be foolish to assume there was any simple kind of cause and effect relationship between the two themes or that Shelley's theories about homosexuality were more than one major factor among many determining his concern with the paradox of repugnant beauty. In fact, it is difficult to decide whether there is any failure of discipline of this kind in Prometheus Unbound. In contrast, there is obvious evidence of control and contrivance: these theories are interlinked with his apocalyptic monism, and he treats them as matters for tentative, sceptical speculation. His treatment of homosexuality reveals the extraordinary richness of his imagination and his extensive discipline within the limits of his kind of poetry, as well as the extravagance of his speculations, and the darker side of his attempt to reconcile scepticism and a vague kind of idealism.

Mario Praz in The Romantic Agony (1933) provides a final example of the inadequate determinism of the 1930's criticism influenced by psychology.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Praz insists that The Romantic Agony is merely a study of the "erotic sensibility" of Romanticism and that he does not consider literary criticism to be psychopathology.⁽⁹⁵⁾ Nevertheless he discounts the importance of belief in poetry, wonders whether all artists are "schizoid", and assumes that it is most important to consider Romanticism as a particular kind of sensibility.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Like Read, Wilson Knight and Maud Bodkin, he offers a false

understanding of the poems. However, more than any other critic, his is aware that in Shelley's later poems pain and horror are an integral part of desire and inseparable from pleasure. He begins his study of Romanticism with Shelley's On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci and comments upon the description of beauty as being "imperilled and contaminated⁽⁹⁷⁾." But he shows no understanding of the connection between Shelley's vision of repugnant beauty and his elaborate analysis of his uncertainty about inspiration and reform.

PART IV.

(1)

In the 1930's in America, Benjamin Kurtz and Carl Grabo published criticism which is far more important and bears directly upon the relationship between Shelley's theory of reform, his scepticism, and his speculations about apocalypse and philosophical monism. Benjamin Kurtz, in The Pursuit of Death (1933), begins with praise of Yeats and Romanticism.⁽⁹⁸⁾ For him Romantic poetry is emotion and intuition rather than reason; and essentially apocalypse, monism, and humanism: "a mystical fusion of mind and matter" and an aestheticism which is "essentially monistic"⁽⁹⁹⁾ These are also his own commitments.. However, his aestheticism includes considerable knowledge of nineteenth century poetry and philosophy. He assumes that Shelley was a thinker although he "avoided a symmetrical theory⁽¹⁰⁰⁾." Although, like the Jungian and Freudian critics, he is committed to apocalypse and sees the

same thing in Shelley, he is more able to appreciate the complexity of the poems. Carl Grabo's major works are A Newton Among Poets (1930), Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation (1935), and The Magic Plant (1936).⁽¹⁰¹⁾ The sheer bulk of his work, the magnitude of his claims for Shelley, and the scope of his research into Shelley's reading and the imagery of the poems, make him one of the most important of the modern critics. As I have suggested, he claims that Shelley realized the ideal of poet-philosopher and that he is especially relevant to the modern world. He claims for Shelley considerable knowledge of Platonism and neo-Platonism and knowledge of chemistry and electricity which "may have been almost professional."⁽¹⁰²⁾ He believes that Shelley's philosophy reconciled neo-Platonism with the advanced scientific speculations of his day and with the radical social philosophy of the late eighteenth century.⁽¹⁰³⁾ Like Benjamin Kurtz, he defines Shelley's philosophy as a "monistic theory", combining humanism and mysticism.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ He is far more concerned with the poems as detailed and original philosophising, and he makes a clearer attempt to deal with Shelley's theories about reform as well as his apocalyptic monism. However, the excellence of his work is limited: his research is influenced too much by his general enthusiasm for Shelley; and his interpretation suffers from his concern to find a stable and coherent philosophy.

As we might expect, Benjamin Kurtz is equivocal in his attitude to the relationship between reason and intuition, and reform and apocalypse. Firstly, he argues that Shelley's

development is gradual rational adjustment to truths apprehended intuitively very early in his life.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Secondly, he allows the presence of Godwinism and reform but claims that Shelley was developing always to rejection of reform and acceptance of present and personal apocalypse. Therefore, Prometheus Unbound combines reform and Platonism but these ideas (although the intended meaning) are not the true meaning: "Salvation is individual, both momentary and continual."⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ For Kurtz, the full aesthetic victory is attained in Epipsychidion, Adonais and The Triumph of Life. Of course, his general ideas link him with Yeats; and at times he even claims that symbols have magic power.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ However, his critical familiarity with Romantic theory provides greater clarity in his explanation of Shelley's scepticism. In his discussion of Adonais, he makes his most obvious avowal of his own involvement with apocalyptic monism. However, although he claims the poem affirms "a monism that discovers reasonably a higher synthesis"⁽¹⁰⁸⁾, he recognises an important degree of scepticism:

"This synthesis of life and death is the product of despair; a hope created out of the wreck of hope."⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

"(In Adonais) thought and poetry, penetrating and repeating the classic elegaic mode, harmonizes the antique, heroic confession of ignorance with the highest reaches of modern reason."⁽¹¹⁰⁾

Despite the tone of unqualified admiration and agreement, these comments are closer to Shelley's meaning than the work of any other modern critic whose work has been discussed. In the same

way, commenting upon the level of personal apocalypse in Prometheus Unbound, Kurtz remarks upon "the near Cyrenaicism of the aesthetic evasion⁽¹¹¹⁾" and points to a degree of scepticism in Shelley's use of myth:

"Fables in the Platonic manner he often constructed ... But always they are palpable fables - an indirect way of stating the problem of what is by poetizing what might be, for the sake of elevating our minds above the commonplace; never an asseverated revelation of what really is. This wise indefiniteness, therefore, centred in the midst of much beautiful and symbolic feeling about the approaches of the mind to its greatest moments, preserves his intellectual honesty.⁽¹¹²⁾"

However, for the most part Kurtz sees conflict between intuition and reason, and the triumph of apocalypse rather than a sceptical attitude to visionary inspiration and reform. His understanding of Shelley's themes seems to be restricted by his own ability to combine a relatively quiescent scepticism with the scholarly aestheticism and theoretical view of apocalypse of a litterateur.

Carl Grabo's criticism benefits from extensive research and contains at least one major critical insight. The Magic Plant is still the best study of its kind - a long survey combining biographical interpretation, research dealing with Shelley's sources, readings of the poems, and evaluation of Shelley as a man and a poet. Grabo explores the neo-Platonic content of the poems and presents an academic treatment of Yeats' point

of view. Furthermore, he presents his own theory (prompted by A.N. Whitehead) about the importance of Shelley's scientific interests in the development of his philosophy, characteristic imagery and symbolism. This theory is explained in A Newton Among Poets. Recent critics have received it with caution and suspicion.⁽¹¹³⁾ There is some justification for this. His criticism is at times irresponsible. His devotion to Shelley as a great poet-philosopher seems to cause a lack of objectivity in his research. A certain ingenuousness of temperament combined with his large claims for Shelley and a note of urgency in his style tend to increase suspicion. In fact, at times he makes unwarrantable assumptions about the sources and false application of his research to the poems. Nevertheless much of his research about Shelley's interest in science is conclusive and adequately verified: the recent uncertainty about the general significance of his theory seems unnecessary.

In the first chapter of A Newton Among Poets we meet Grabo's characteristic blend of thorough biographical knowledge and enthusiasm for the man which leads to extravagant surmise.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ The second chapter, however, is far more valuable: the evidence of scientific learning and of borrowing from Erasmus Darwin seems indisputable. Chapters III to VIII combine the extravagance of the first and the excellence of the second. Grabo outlines the scientific theories of Erasmus Darwin, Herschel (the astronomer), Newton, Humphrey Davy, and the Italian, Beccaria; and he asserts their importance in Shelley's poems. Shelley's enthusiasm for Darwin is clear in his letters.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

However, there is no documentary evidence of this kind that he read the various works of Herschel and Davy, Newton's Opticks, or Beccaria's treatise on electricity. Grabo's argument for the relevance of Herschel's earlier theories is the most thorough he offers in connection with this basic problem. He admits the lack of evidence of direct reading:

"What is more probable is that he read some such scientific monthly as the excellent Nicholson's Journal ... the particular source of Shelley's knowledge of science is not in most instances of much moment. (116)"

His argument is that when Shelley's scientific learning "harmonizes with the findings and theories" of a particular scientist, the scientist may "be used to interpret Shelley". (In practice, although he ascribes intricate processes of abstraction and reorganization of scientific learning to Shelley, he does not say the scientist is the meaning). The argument is much too perfunctory and inconclusive. But this does not invalidate his theory. He supplies another more valid basis for it: "the greater part of the scientific allusions in the Prometheus are explicable upon a careful reading of Darwin's epics and the Zoonomia. (117)" With this in mind, the main theories of the other scientists Grabo refers to may be summarised: the earlier theories of Herschel were concerned with cosmic evolution (in a finite cosmic); in Newton, the crucial theory is that the "ether" is energy out of which the cosmos is formed; in Humphrey Davy, the crucial theories are the round of renovation and decay in nature and an electrical

explanation of matter; Beccaria also developed an electrical theory.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Drawin reported the work of Herschel and Newton.

If we grant that Shelley was interested in science it seems reasonable to assume that he knew the discoveries of Humphrey Davy. (Only the work of Beccaria seems unlikely to be relevant⁽¹¹⁹⁾). Shelley's interest in science is obvious and

Grabo points to clear parallels between Prometheus Unbound and Darwin's poems. For example, Darwin used poetry to popularise science; he linked alchemy, ancient myth, Rosicrucianism and contemporary science; he equated Love with gravitation, electricity and magnetism which he thought of as "subtle fluids"; and he linked all life in a theory of creative evolution.⁽¹²⁰⁾ Furthermore, apart from these general

parallels, Grabo shows that there are conclusive parallels between many details of Prometheus Unbound and the work of Darwin, Herschel, Newton and Davy. The prophecy of flight is paralleled in Darwin; the theory of a cosmic catastrophe and rebirth occurs in Darwin and Herschel; the theory of the vast age of the earth and evolution seems to be derived from Darwin; the description of the Spirit of the Earth parallels the description of various electrical phenomena in The Botanic Garden and it was common knowledge that electricity might explain animation; the references to light are scientific and paralleled in Darwin and Newton; the description of gravitation and magnetism is explicit; and Grabo's claim that the "crimson gas" of inspiration is nitrogen is supported by parallel imagery in Darwin.⁽¹²¹⁾ These parallels seem indisputable. Unfortunately

Grabo cites with equal conviction other parallels which are inconclusive. Nevertheless the large number of genuine discoveries are adequate evidence that Prometheus Unbound contains detailed references to science and that its themes are influenced by contemporary scientific theory. From the evidence within the poem and its agreement with the tendency to monism in so much contemporary science and with Darwin's linking of Love, electrical phenomena and evolution, Grabo argues that there is an "identification of love, energy and the spirit of animation" and that Shelley linked moral regeneration and the perfection of science, and Platonism and contemporary scientific theory. (122) This also seems to be true.

However, Grabo lacks understanding of Prometheus Unbound as a complete poem and his explanation of the relationship between these ideas is unsatisfactory.

Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation shows Grabo's final inability to explain the main themes. In the final chapter, he attempts to explain that Shelley was committed to both monism and evolutionary development and that his intellectual acceptance of science was accompanied by "emotional acceptance" of Platonic mysticism. (123) He attempts to find a coherent and stable philosophical system. That is, he commits himself to an intellectual puzzle which is quite different to Shelley's sceptical sense of paradox and dilemma. The nature of the material he must work with forces him into self-contradiction and philosophical incoherence. The attempt to find a completely systematic philosophy comes to a temporary rest in neo-Platonism:

"Mankind is God himself, God who suffers a self-imposed evolution ... the One who imposes multiplicity upon his unity, and from this multiplicity evolves again into unity. (124),"

Nevertheless he retreats from this and praises Shelley in terms reminiscent of the aestheticism of Kurtz. He defines Shelley as the prophet of the "creative and aesthetic spirit": the "prophet of futurity" in that he is most interested in "the infinite realization in creative and aesthetic satisfactions of the liberated spirit of man. (125)\" In The Magic Plant he outlines the same basic idea that Shelley's final belief reconciles scientific monism, neo-Platonic mysticism and a theory of creative evolution. (126) However, in The Magic Plant he does not attempt to explain in detail that Prometheus Unbound is a completely coherent philosophy; and he qualifies his comments about neo-Platonism. He says that Shelley accepted the primacy of intuition but rejected the attitude to evolution of neo-Platonism:

"(Shelley suggested) an evolution whose goal is not constant nor known but which must endlessly be redefined, as of a limit constantly approached but never reached. (127),"

Of course, his attitude is still that the poems contain a profound and comprehensive philosophy. However, he allows that there is a degree of scepticism:

"(Shelley) remained fundamentally agnostic to all beliefs, though allying himself to those causes which most

appealed to him, and provisionally accepting a philosophy which best satisfied his doubts. (128)"

But, as he believes that Shelley achieved a more or less systematic reconciliation of science and Platonic mysticism, he concludes his long and tortuous final chapter with the equivocal comment that Shelley "synthesized a philosophy of his own which served his purpose if no other. (129)"

Grabo and Kurtz both pay more attention to Shelley's speculations about reform and progress than the Jungian and Freudian critics. However, Kurtz argues according to the theory of dissociation of reason and imagination. In contrast, although not completely consistent, Grabo stresses the presence of contemporary scientific theory as well as neo-Platonism and that the poems are disciplined structures which link apocalypse and prophecies about a utopia. However, Grabo fails to understand the paradox his research makes obvious. He praises and attempts to explain as the basis of a profound philosophical system the fact that Shelley invented numerous symbols and theories which suggest that vision is reform. His well-intentioned attempt to find a stable philosophy falsifies the complexity of content and structure of the poems. In Prometheus Unbound the elaborate and extravagant theories about matter as energy and Love, and the theories about morality, science, art, magic and spiritual power, are inseparable from a sense of uncertainty and hopelessness. Analysis of this sense of dilemma accompanies his other theories and implies that their scope and

precision must be limited. In spite of his concern with the propaganda of reform and complex philosophical speculations, Shelley offers repetitive symbolic illustration of a number of sceptical paradoxes rather than the systematic philosophical certainty Grabo finds.

(2)

In Prometheus Unbound the first suggestions about future reform are given in Asia's outline of history in Act II Sc.IV. They are linked with the initial paradox that desire for knowledge is good and evil. Asia's history records the failure of man under Jupiter. It contains the theory of evil (first stated by the Furies as "all best things are thus confused to ill" (Act I. 1.628)) that in man's state of imperfection the best is the worst. Therefore, the fire of Prometheus is a terrible beast of prey as well as something beautiful and useful. Man's power over the material world allows him to work with "gems and poisons" (1.70). Science is a paradox: it strikes the thrones of earth and heaven but does not destroy them. The arts make evil from good: sculpture is love which becomes poisonous wine. Medicine, exploration and communal life also show that the best is the worst. When "Evil, the immedicable plague" rules, disease is incurable, exploration only spreads the contagion, and communal life becomes tyranny under which each man is "the outcast, the abandoned, the alone" (1.105). Shelley suggests that man must attempt to progress although life is merely "shadows idle/ Of unreal good" (1.58).

In Act III, in the same way, reform is a potential, actual achievement and the Earth describes the new Promethean universe as "this for goal of Time" (Sc. III 1.174); but it is also the fulfilment of vision and in part merely an Elysian dream. The Earth stresses that the new universe is a hope in spite of despair. She says that Prometheus's emblem is the lamp which had been offered to him by his worshippers:

"even as those

Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly"

(Act III Sc. III 1.170-173).

The triumph is uncertain. As hope is untransmitted, we should remember the despair of Act I and the Furies' warning that Prometheus and Christ are rejected by man. As Prometheus is an immortal, he has not passed across death's darkness: it is uncertain that the torch is transmitted beyond life. In this way it is ironic that the "destined cave" of the triumph is beside the temple in which Prometheus had been worshipped. The emphasis is upon the equivocal way in which Prometheus is man and god. He seems merely the incarnation of Hope. He is the immortality hoped for beyond death achieved without knowledge of what is beyond death, the fulfilment of hope without the end of despair. Therefore, at the end of Act II when the cave is first mentioned it seems a transformation of the cave of Demogorgon.

In Act II Sc. V the lyric "My soul is an enchanted boat"

(1.72-110) parallels the story of Asia's journey to Demogorgon's cave. But the journey to the cave becomes a flight to Elysian beauty. As Asia says, the boat of desire turns from death to a dream of "A paradise of vaulted bowers/Lit by downward-gazing flowers". From one point of view, the bower, cave, wilderness and island images suggest the beauty of escape and refuge from imperfection within a separate and self-contained world of perfection. However, the images also parallel Asia's use of the cave of Demogorgon as an image to show that perfection is impossible. In Act II Sc. IV Asia says that the "desert hearts" of men "are tortured by desire, "so ruining the lair wherein they raged". She describes the "legioned hopes" which are the gift of Prometheus and sleep "within folded Elysian flowers". These hopes have only "thin and rainbow wings" and are inadequate to hide death and protect man from the evil of infinite desire which makes him a lonely outcast. (Act II Sc. IV. 1.50-105). The parallels in the lyric in Sc. V. seem clear. The wings of desire are strong and fly from death to a cave where the loneliness of desire becomes separation from evil. However, as the cave is a bower "Peopled by shapes", Asia also seems to enter the "folded Elysian flowers" of Prometheus, and the flowers seem to remain folded. The image suggests both the joy of triumph and the despair of infinite desire.

In Act III Sc. III, when Prometheus describes the cave, the same paradoxes occur. Despite its beauty, the lovers are rather like prisoners and isolated from the "ever-moving air",

birds and bees in the world outside. In this way, the image implies that perfection is impossible and that infinite desire imprisons man in loneliness. Whereas Prometheus says at the beginning of his speech that Asia is the "light of life", and recalls the imagery of the lyric "Life of Life!", the cave is lit with a "doubtful light" (Act III Sc.III 1.17): we are reminded that inspiration is uncertain. Furthermore, in contrast to the previous paradisaal images, the cave is a strangely crude kind of paradise. The "mossy seats" and "rough walls" prompt the explicit comment: "A simple dwelling, which shall be our own" (Sc. II 1.22). The roughness, the fountain, the suggestion of translucence and the fact that Ione will "chant fragments of sea-music, are reminiscent of the idyll of Apollo and Ocean in the previous scene; this is perhaps intended to recall the parallel between "the unpastured sea hungering for calm" and the monster Love. However, this last parallel is not necessary for understanding of the image. The fact that the pastoral paradise is rather prosaic suggests that perfection is impossible and recalls the horror which opposes the dream. The sadness of Prometheus seems a further obvious indication; and the dim light is "the mountain's frozen tears" (Sc. III. 1.15). The description of Prometheus, Asia and Ione listening to the echoes of the human world is also paradoxical. It recalls the earlier rhetorical question "What can hide man from mutability?" (Sc. III. 1.25) and returns to the description of man's transformation and progress. Prometheus says that love is "almost unheard" and pain is inseparable from love (Sc.III 1.45-48

The echoes of human art are "lovely apparitions ... the wandering voices and the shadows ... Of all that man becomes" (Sc.III 1.49-58). We should remember that the cave is dark and peaceful with a fountain with an "awakening sound", that Asia has described herself as a "sleeping swan" (Act II Sc. V 1.73), and that the wandering spirits of the human mind described vision as a false dream of joy. The paradoxes are also implied by the description of the images as they become radiant:

"as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality"

(Act III Sc. III 1.50-53).

According to the image, reality is communion with Love; and love creates "the progeny immortal" (Sc. III 1.54) which foreshadow, encourage and celebrate man's change. In contrast, the cave is not altogether a bright celebration of creative love. It is dark; and, although the imagery is sexual, Prometheus woos Asia only with the promise: "we will sit and talk of time and change" (Sc. III 1.23)⁽¹³⁰⁾ The description of the cave suggests that Prometheus and Asia are shadows parallel to the echoes of the wind. It denies the progress it celebrates.

The Earth's description of the cave has the same significance (Sc. III 1.124-148). To begin with it shows the glory of the triumph. Prometheus remembered the cave as it was before his triumph, the Earth describes its new beauty as it becomes a fitting place for the love of Asia, the "Lamp of Earth", and

Prometheus, the fire-giver. It is decorated with "bright golden globes" of fruit, and flowers which are "points of coloured light". Furthermore, the Promethean "folded Elysian flowers" (Act II Sc. IV. l. 60). and fiery thirst for knowledge seem transformed in the "purple and translucid bowls" eternally brimming with æreal dew (and the image parallels the azure and emerald urns "for ever full" beside Ocean's throne (Act III Sc. II l.42-43)). However, the Earth also makes the link between the cave of Prometheus and Demogorgon's cave more explicit. She describes the triumphal cave as where she mourned for Prometheus and her spirit inspired men with prophecy and war. Therefore, it parallels Demogorgon's cave as it is described to Asia and as Asia describes it herself (cf. Act II Sc. I l.196-206; Act II Sc. III l.1-10). We should remember the worst significance of the Promethean thirst for knowledge. The purple flowers seem horrible as well as beautiful: they "stand ever mantling" with dew so that their nectar seems in part a dark scum. The spirit of the earth (l.124) encircles the cave "Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams" (l.145). The image is important because it heralds the appearance of the Spirit of the Earth; the convolutions of Shelley's sentence construction have caused many readers to miss the connection. The dream image recalls the previous suggestions that the cave is an illusion and that Love is a dream. Thus the bright golden globes "suspended in their own green heaven", and the "translucid bowls," are reminiscent of the sea-prison atmosphere of Prometheus's description of the cave. At this point,

Shelley introduces the Spirit of the Earth as a repetition of the basic images for the Promethean gift and the form of Love in Act I. The Spirit of the Earth is a thirst and a fire (as the "torch bearer" 1.148). Like the form of Love it is a flying spirit who moves with "feet unwet, unwearied and undelaying (1.157). Therefore, the end of Sc. III should be clearly equivocal. The Grecian temple of love also inspired mad prophecy. If we consider it as an illustration of the triumph of light, the evidence is inconclusive. Prometheus is accompanied by the light of life and the torch-bearer, but the cave does not blaze and hope is an "untransmitted torch".

To a large extent, understanding of Act III Sc. IV. depends upon interpretation of the Spirit of the Earth. Carl Grabo explains Panthea's description of the Spirit of the Earth at the beginning of Sc. IV as evidence that the Spirit is atmospheric electricity. He explains that in this scene Shelley reconciles scientific monism and Platonism by thinking of Love as electricity:

"Love, energy, electricity, heat are thought of as one, or as but aspects of the ether which, in Newtonian hypothesis, is the source of energy, life and matter. (131)"

And he says that Shelley links with this the idea that evil and good in nature exist as the will of man is evil or good. (132)

As I have said, the interpretation seems correct but incomplete and beyond this Grabo distorts the poem. The Spirit of the Earth is a recapitulation of the theme that Love is Desolation. In the original three act version of the poem it emphasises

that Love, the neo-Platonic One, is a dream and that in spite of this man must hope by linking plans for reform, scientific monism and neo-Platonic mysticism. Therefore, after recalling the images of the "planet-crested shape" of Love and atmospheric electricity, Panthea says in her description of the Spirit:

"Before Jove reigned

It loved our sister Asia, and it came

Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light

Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted

As one bit by a dispas " (Act III Sc.IV 1.15-19).

Like Prometheus, the Spirit is Love as power and a poisonous unquenchable thirst. Furthermore, it loved Asia in this way before Jove reigned; and love then was child-like innocence and lack of knowledge (Sc.IV. 1.19-24); and the Spirit now claims: "Mother, I am grown wiser" (1.33). The Spirit of the Earth parallels Asias history of the fall of man and the rise of Jupiter, when there was love but lack of "the birthright of their being, knowledge, power ... For thirst of which they fainted" (Act II Sc. IV 1.32-42). Thus it repeats the idea that knowledge and love are desire. But Shelley depends a great deal upon Act I. The references to knowledge gain in significance if we understand Prometheus's ambiguous relationship with the Magus Zoroaster in Act I (1.192). As Zoroaster met his own image, Prometheus meets himself as the Phantasm of Jupiter. The meeting teaches Prometheus that he is the power to save mankind (Act I. 1. 807-820); it also shows that Prometheus is always Jupiter.

as well as the hope that the existence of evil depends upon whether the will of man is evil or good. Therefore, when the Spirit of the Earth describes the change which begins the new universe, the Promethean revelation is that evil becomes beautiful (Act III Sc. IV 1.79-85).

At the end of Act III the Spirit of the Hour also stresses the horrors of the present world while he describes the glories of the new Promethean world. Shelley describes the present world in terms of the classic dictum of evil ("All hope abandon ye who enter here" (1.136)), and says that there are only "sparks of love and hope" (1.145) to oppose this. He also provides a striking image which seems a clear amalgam of scepticism, scientific monism and Platonism:

"The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed or hoped, is torn aside"

(Act III Sc. IV 1.190-192).

The implicit reference to Platonism has often been commented upon.⁽¹³³⁾ Of course, the image also recalls the earlier cloud images and the scientific monism linked with these. However, the cloud images are always equivocal. Furthermore, we should remember the horrible chameleon qualities of the Furies (cf. Act I. 1.465-472) and that they cried "Tear the veil! It is torn" (Act I 1.539) and showed the failure of knowledge and desire. Shelley repeats the implication that knowledge is illusion and horror as well as visionary revelation.

The idea that man progresses towards utopian anarchy and a visionary Elysium is a paradoxical ideal based upon the further paradox that Love is desire and despair.

(3)

As the preface shows, Prometheus Unbound has two major levels of significance concerning inspiration and reform. On the first and more superficial level, it is intended to teach a number of explicit ideals and a number of tentative (although, in some cases, elaborate) philosophical theories. Therefore, at the end of Act III he outlines a future utopia, praises love, equality and freedom, stresses the purity of will and inspiration necessary for the true revolution, and reminds us of the present visionary intuitions which sustain his idealism. He also implies the tentative speculations about magic, contemporary science, and apocalyptic mysticism which are an attempt to reconcile his utopian and visionary ideals. Beyond this he contrives reference to his paradoxical doubts about inspiration and reform. Furthermore, at the end of Act III he uses discursive rhetoric in order to emphasise the superficial level of propaganda. Unfortunately his skill in ambiguous discursive verse is unequal to the task and the ambiguous generalizations falter between the sublime and magniloquent bathos in the same way as the combination of lament and panegyric at the end of Alastor. But his theory of utopian anarchy is clear: there must be freedom in all areas of life, in government, worship, the community and sex. He also implies that his desire for anarchy and form is a dilemma (as he explains further in Act IV).

and that his tentative reconciliation of reform and apocalyptic mysticism is ultimately inconclusive. Any interpretation which underrates Shelley's sense of paradox at this point seems fated to confusion, and, in most cases, the assumption (obvious in The Pursuit of Death) that in some way the true meaning is a version of Platonic mysticism. Even Milton Wilson, in his recent study of Prometheus Unbound commits himself to these errors. At the end of Act III, Wilson allows the question: "Is the goal radical or Platonic?"⁽¹³⁴⁾ Act IV brings the conclusion: "We have not been able to answer the question"⁽¹³⁵⁾. He explains that the poem is "profoundly transitional in its thematic structure" and that in Epipsychidion and Adonais the "parallel roads .. meet only in Eternity"⁽¹³⁶⁾. His interpretations are more profound, but in many ways he is similar to Kurtz and Grabo. At the end of Act II, the extravagant fantasy of such images as the neo-Platonic temple in the sun (cf. Sc. IV 1.108-121) stated without clear differentiation between symbol and fact, and linked with implications about visionary apocalypse, imply paradoxical uncertainty. Furthermore, in contrast to Grabo's emphasis upon the linking of neo-Platonic magic, mysticism and scientific monism, Shelley's uncertainty allows for various degrees of commitment to his speculations about reform and prophecy. Although scientific monism is implied in the description of the Spirit of the Earth, in the rest of Act III Sc. IV. reference to the relationship between science and progress is avoided; and the neo-Platonic machinery

of sylphs and heirarchies of heavenly powers is in part ironic. The emphasis upon present imperfection recalls the basic analysis of sceptical uncertainty which is the ultimate comment upon the inadequacy of the elaborate subsidiary speculations and even his superficial level of propaganda. At this level, Shelley implies that his commitment to the need for a tremendous effort (both stoical and visionary) to create success from horror and despair is tragic.

He echoes Shakespeare; and the influence appears in a major symbol which seems to be contrived and in minor images where it is more difficult to decide whether the borrowing is conscious. The tragic nature of Promethen inspiration is explored in more detail in Act IV, written after he completed The Cenci. Leavis commented upon the Shakespearean images and phrasing of The Cenci and later critics have noted further similarities.⁽¹³⁷⁾ The Cenci is a more direct treatment of the tragic implications in Prometheus Unbound. Beatrice combines the grandeur and terrible contamination of Promethean vision. In her horrible ruin she inverts the Promethean paradox: "Worse than despair, /Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope" (Act V. Sc. IV. 1.97-98). But in her last speeches she claims the paradox of joy and horror:

"the faith that I,

Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,

Lived ever holy and unstained." (The Cenci Act V.Sc.IV

1.147-149).

Yet further analysis of The Cenci is unnecessary. Although

less obvious, the tragic implications in Prometheus Unbound may stand by themselves.⁽¹³⁸⁾ In Act III Sc. IV we seem intended to recognise that the Spirit of the Earth is reminiscent of Lear's Fool (or Shakespearean tragic clowning and madness in general) and seems determined to become an anti-imitation of Prometheus and Asia (cf. Act III Sc. IV 1.90-96). This is the converse side of the paradox of "beautiful idealisms" and mimesis. The theme of tragic madness is suggested by earlier Shakespearean echoes when Prometheus first describes his triumphal cave.⁽¹³⁹⁾ In the same description, Prometheus also foreshadows more explicitly the wise innocence and apocalyptic nonsense which is what Shelley seems to intend the part childishness of the Spirit of the Earth to be:

"and make

Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence"

(Act III Sc. III 1.31-33)

At the end of Act III Sc. III, when the Earth prepares for the appearance of the Spirit of the Earth (her torch-bearer), she explains that it is a further emblem of Prometheus and that Promethean inspiration and prophecy are madness:

"and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular"

(Act III Sc. III 1.126-128).

It is also important that in Act III Sc. IV, after the Spirit of the Earth has commented upon his significance as an antic imitation of Prometheus, the image for life is the "painted veil ... which mimicked ... All men believed or hoped" (l.190 - 192). In this way, more clearly than in the earlier poems, the veil image (so important in Alastor and Mont Blanc) suggests tragic despair about reason: as visionary inspiration conjures only with untrustworthy illusions, hope and ecstasy are horror and frenzy. The tearing away of the painted veil seems intended to parallel the equivocal insanity of Lear and Hamlet, their uncertainty about reality and illusion and the tragic paradox that failure is triumph. Prometheus Unbound is a Romantic lyrical drama, Shelley shows no interest in individual character, his analysis of tragic paradox is more abstract and more restricted to systematic generalizing, his frenzy is more shrill, he lacks the maturity and genius of Shakespeare: in all ways Prometheus Unbound is less complex and less important than Hamlet and King Lear. Nevertheless, Shelley seems to contrive the implication that madness is inseparable from his visions of apocalypse and reform. He offers a sense of tragic dilemma as a comment upon the obvious conflict between apocalypse and reform and the extravagance and logical instability of his subsidiary speculations.

PART FIVE

(1)

In recent years in America there has been a renewal of the tradition which acclaims Shelley as a poet of myth and apocalypse. This renewal is an important part of the overwhelming spate of criticism from America in the last decade. Furthermore, the New Critics, the school linked with Eliot and Leavis, seem to have failed to achieve in the 1930's and 1940's the almost universal influence in general criticism achieved by Eliot and Leavis at the same time in England. The recent American enthusiasm for Shelley as a visionary is paralleled by extensive academic interest in the other Romantic poets and in general critical theories relevant to the earlier and later forms of Romanticism.

Frederick A. Pottle is a major influence (his essay, "The Case of Shelley", was first published in 1952).⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ His theories about Shelley are reminiscent of Wilson Knight and Benjamin Kurtz. He explains Shelley as a passionately religious poet with the faith of the prophet, the faith of Isaiah, and a message about personal apocalypse rather than reform.⁽¹⁴¹⁾ He offers, in his own phrase, "aesthetic relativism"⁽¹⁴²⁾ . A large measure of this seems to be the durable American aestheticism which was also Kurtz's basic theory. However, he understands Shelley as a poet of "highly adroit and skilful writing"⁽¹⁴³⁾ . He has the benefit of the now well-established American interest in Romantic poetic

techniques.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ But he refers to Wimsatt's excellent and objective analysis of Romantic wit (in The Verbal Icon) and claims that "such practice is not carelessness but a brilliant extension of poetic possibilities."⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ Although Pottle shows clearer understanding of Shelley's methods, he overestimates their value; and he shows little understanding of Shelley's equivocations about belief. Unfortunately the tendency to combine rather naive admiration of visionary Romanticism with profound analysis of Romantic techniques seems characteristic of much recent American criticism. For this reason, much of the new criticism is less useful than the earlier work of Kurtz and Grabo.

Earl Wasserman's collection of essays, The Subtler Language (1959), is a more perceptive, yet perhaps even more perverse version of the new American aestheticism. The Subtler Language reflects the recent growth of turgid jargon, and hybrid critical theories (which attempt to reconcile antithetical ideas). For Wasserman, the meaning of poetry is "syntactical", a rich interaction of verbal significance:

"(the verbal relationships) work syntactically, thickening and concretizing the tenuous language of discourse, transforming language from intermediary to actor, and so enmeshing attention in the intra-referential action."⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

This idea, in some ways, is like Wimsatt's theory about the iconic value of poetry and Yvor Winters' theory that poetry is like the natural world. But Wasserman is not concerned with

clarity and precision as standards. He argues that complexity of structure allows poetry to state an extraordinary kind of meaning: poetry is a microcosm, a mimetic replica of an imaginative vision in which dualism is replaced by monism.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ His theory is a new version of the belief that the imagination perceives a transcendental reality and embodies it in the structure of poetry. He believes that Shelley was a major exponent of this craft:

"Shelley clearly understood that meaning is syntactical ... he also knew that the imagination seeks its own kind of thought by the extraordinary syntactical organization of a special reality."⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

In the essay on Mont Blanc in The Subtler Language, Shelley begins with monism and progresses to religious and transcendental vision and does not discount his fundamental monism.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ On the other hand, Wasserman writes with profound understanding of some Romantic techniques; and he comments upon the presence of equivocal and elaborately contrived figurative inventions and notes that Shelley refers to scepticism as well as monism. But his general point of view is that the poem is a lucid and coherent statement of transcendental monism. As in the work of other important recent critics, despite increased understanding of Romantic theories and techniques, a new theoretical aestheticism obscures the complexity and basic limitations of early nineteenth century Romanticism.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾

Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism (1957) is also relevant, Kermode describes Anatomy of Criticism as "the latest

extraordinary development of Symbolist criticism. (151),"

He repeats arguments first published by Wimsatt and Brooks in order to condemn Frye's early essays. (152)

There is a great deal of truth in these complaints. On the other hand, Frye's Aristotelian generalizing is not nominally committed to Symbolism. Frye's basic assumptions are that art is universal, that we may distinguish between an aesthetic and a moral response, and that we must maintain the autonomy of literary criticism as a field of liberal learning. (153)

Anatomy of Criticism is a more complex (and in many ways more valuable) version of the new, eclectic aestheticism than Kermode suggests. It combines profound understanding of the limitations of art along with borrowing from Jung and Cassirer and elaborate analysis of concepts drawn from Romantic theory. Frye's basic definition of literature reflects the most sound recent theories about verbal structures: literature is a "body of hypothetical creations" which may enter into any kind of relationship with "the worlds of truth and fact ... ranging from the most to the least explicit. (154)"

But, in accordance with the Symbolist tradition, he is opposed to "naive allegory", prejudiced against simplicity of content, and argues that a complex kind of lyric is the quintessential genre. (155)

His theories about religious literature are particularly relevant to recent criticism of Shelley. An important section of Anatomy of Criticism has the title, "Anagogic Phase: Symbol as Monad".

He attempts to categorize religious literature without risk

of confusion between literature and religion. He observes that the anagogic perspective can appear independently of any particular religion.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Nevertheless, in practice, his analysis of anagogy tends to become Symbolist theorizing. He explains that there is a centre of imaginative experience which subsumes all experience:

"Nature is now inside the mind of an infinite man ... (this) is the conceivable or imaginative limit of desire, which is infinite, eternal, and hence apocalyptic. By apocalypse I mean primarily the imaginative conception of the whole of nature as the content of an infinite and eternal living body which, if not human, is closer to being human than to being inanimate."⁽¹⁵⁷⁾

These comments are justifiable as empirical generalizations about some religious literature. They are treacherous when Frye substitutes a priori philosophising for the finding of categories, and the "still center", at first a version of the creative imagination, becomes something close to mystic communion:

"the poem appears as a microcosm of all literature, an individual manifestation of the total order of words. Anagogically, then, the symbol is a monad, all symbols being united in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol which is, as dianoia, the Logos, and, as mythos, total creative act."⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

Frye approaches the Romantic theory in which the poet and the

universe are indistinguishable and poetry is transcendental vision.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Nevertheless, his theory of anagogy is extremely useful as a partial analysis, at a profound level of analytic generalization, of the paradoxes which arise when apocalyptic humanism is combined with monism and mysticism. This indirect and limited usefulness is characteristic of the large amount of recent criticism which combines confusion about Romanticism and profound understanding.

Harold Bloom's Shelley's Mythmaking (1959) is a major example of the recent American interest in Shelley. Bloom claims the criticism of Pottle, Frye, and Wimsatt, and the theories of the Jewish theologian Martin Buber, as his sources of inspiration.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ He both misleads and illuminates understanding of the poems. Furthermore, he returns us to a more direct form of apocalyptic monism; and he changes the significance of most of the material he borrows from Wimsatt and Frye. Despite critical sophistication and incisiveness, his apocalyptic mysticism makes his work similar to Wilson Knight's The Christian Renaissance, although Bloom substitutes Martin Buber for Goethe and Nietzsche. He praises Shelley as an important mythopoeic poet. The distinctions between the responses I-Thou and I-It propounded by Buber are the immediate basis of his theory. Buber's theory is based upon parts of traditional Judaism. However, it is also connected with European "existential" (or subjectivist) philosophy, and the ideas common to the philosophical systems of Kierkegaard, Bergson and Croce.

In general, Buber's philosophy is relevant to Shelley's poems in the same way as Frye's criticism: as the poems contain ideas which are part of the subjectivist tradition, to some extent, they benefit from criticism which derives from it. Therefore, many of Bloom's interpretations are striking variations upon important themes within the poems. Nevertheless, whatever the value of Buber's philosophy might be, Bloom preaches a version of apocalyptic agnosticism which leans towards monism; and he does so by means of a confused theory of poetry. For Bloom, poetry is a mimetic representation of the form of truth: good poetry is anagogic, or iconic; and the true anagoge (or icon) is a concrete figure which embodies, or mirrors, spiritual truth (i.e. I-Thou mythopoeia).⁽¹⁶¹⁾ He presents what is in effect a return to the idea that poetry is magic. His equivocations about the importance of reason are reminiscent of Yeats. Whereas Yeats says that the greatest poetry provides the theory of magic, Bloom says that Shelley's mythopoeia is an advanced kind in which I-Thou experience becomes the basis for independent theology.⁽¹⁶²⁾ His acknowledgement of the influence of Frye (and Wimsatt) is misleading. He is a less equivocal primitivist than Frye: for Bloom, mythopoeia exists in perfection in primordial man.⁽¹⁶³⁾ Whereas Frye attempts to cover all religious poetry, Bloom rejects Christianity and demands allegiance to some kind of apocalyptic monism.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ In Bloom's work the conflict between myth and icon and the poet as a theologian (and allegorist) is

a major critical weakness. In his commentary upon Prometheus Unbound Act IV, he says:

"Fair form is as much of these truths as we can be given to work upon, for the form itself is the truth here. Not allegory, but anagogy, vision, confronts us. (165)"

However, at other times he is forced into the following kind of equivocation:

"Criticism of a poem must also to an extent abstract, formulate, but it is good to keep that kind of necessary clumsiness to a minimum. (166)"

His attitude to mysticism is also equivocal. Opposition to mysticism is a fundamental principle in his theory. (167)

But the apocalyptic part of his theory is connected with mysticism. (168) Thus his general theory founders upon the contradictions inherent in the magical tradition; and in interpretation he restricts Shelley to the ritual and theology of mythopoeia.

Nevertheless, Shelley's Mythmaking is an incisive and thorough account of the tradition of myth and magic. Bloom's understanding of Shelley's use of paradox seems to be influenced by Frye's theory of the symbol as a monod. (169) Also, the idea that myth passes from I-It to I-Thou to I-It relationship leads to relatively precise interpretation of Shelley's visionary cycle of ecstasy and despair. Bloom recognises elaborate ambiguity in the poems. For example, he says that the Furies state ironies "which are anything but a simple dualism":

"The selfhood is the I which confronts no Thou's,
but only experiences It's. (170)"

Beyond the jargon there is profound awareness of irony and the paradox that Promethean perfection is unstable. He also reads the "Light of Life" lyric as a work of complex ambiguity and paradox. But he can understand ambiguity and irony only in terms of the cycle of vision. He describes Prometheus Unbound as an anagoge of triumphant "religious apocalypse". His analysis of the "Light of Life" lyric passes from acute interpretation to the claim that the ambiguity is a superb mimetic embodiment of apocalypse:

"The stanza is calculated to defeat analysis; its imagery deliberately refuses to be unraveled. Asia's Thou is to be met, not explained. The poetry here is determinedly anti-critical, with superb aplomb. (171)"

This is the worst kind of arbitrary misreading and misjudging of the poems encouraged by the magical tradition. It also shows Bloom's profound understanding within the tradition: it is a direct parallel to Yeats' praise of the magicians who wrap their vision in the lights and shadows of rich obscurity in order to create a talisman. It is also reminiscent of Shelley's "painted veil" image; but Shelley's major images are more complex than Bloom suggests.

(2)

Bloom describes Prometheus Unbound Act IV as a "sustained nuptial song in honor of the state of ... renewed relationship. (172)

As he says, Prometheus and Asia have withdrawn into their cave and much of the imagery is sexual. We hear the song of the awakening spirits of the human mind, and Earth and Air, as they celebrate their freedom and perfection and enact the creation of the new universe. This is followed by the two emblems, or visions, of love; and the emblems are linked with a history of the past evolution of the earth. The love songs of the two visions celebrate the achieved progress to perfection in man and nature. Finally, Demogorgon comments upon the moral change in man which is the basis of the new universe. However, even this brief outline shows that Act IV deals with more than personal apocalypse. There are the more familiar levels of paradox suggested by Grabo's criticism. Act IV promises actual change in nature, and power to control nature, as well as visionary apocalypse. Man will command new science and new art: language is a "perpetual Orphic song" (1.415); science controls all the elements (1.396); and man even learns the secret of flight, "he strides the air" (1.421). This is a result of natural evolution as well as purified will. Yet, as evil is illusion, there is no change: man has merely drawn aside the veil (1.57-59). The universe is Love and a monad: Love is an "elemental subtlety, like light" (1.255), or, as in the emblematic vision of the Spirit of the Earth, "one æreal mass" (1.260). But finite form remains. The spirits enacting the creation of the new universe sing: "Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze" (1.69). The new order is the old forms made perfect as reflections of Form. In contrast to the references

to contemporary science, many images are derived from the pre-Copernican cosmos. Panthea's description of Love suggests the divine harmony of the ancient spheres (1.186-188); and the emblem of the Spirit of the Earth is a complicated crystal universe suffused with harmony (1.238-239). Therefore, although the new universe is built upon freedom and free love, there is a chain of being and man is "a chain of linked thought" (1.394). The Promethean achievement is also mysticism and magic. The spirits sing: "We have felt the wand of Power" (1.67); and Demogorgon calls upon "Kings of suns and stars, Daemons and Gods, / Aetherial Dominations" (1.529-530).

Act IV, like Act III, contains numerous paradoxes linked with Shelley's concern with reform and inspiration. Of course, it also implies analysis of the sceptical dilemma which seems inaccessible to the mythopoeiac tradition of criticism.

Even a cursory analysis of Act IV should suggest that it does not merely increase ecstatic delight until a final apocalyptic climax is reached. It begins with a funeral dirge. The wild storm of delight of the Chorus of Spirits and Hours is followed by the more restrained description of the emblems; and the emblems of the moon and earth are followed by a vision of "sepulchred emblems / Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!" (1.295). We are shown emblems of both sides of the Promethean paradox. There is no justification for Bloom's assumption that the emblems of the moon and earth are the "mythic culminations" of the poem. (173) The later ecstatic songs make explicit reference to the imperfection of man; for example,

man is "a leprous child", although in the new universe a "child restored" (1.388-393). The songs end with a reminder of the suffering and tears before the change (e.g. "And the weak day weeps" (1.493). This vision is followed by a lament by Ione and Panthea: the lament combines joy and sadness, beauty and threatening darkness. Thus, at the very end of the poem, the vigil of the two sisters beside the cave is a parallel to their vigil before the triumph of Prometheus. Shelley implies recapitulation of most of his main images and paradoxes in this short scene and the songs which precede it.

Ione and Panthea recall the basic paradox that the Promethean gift is a "thirst which outran ... perishing waters." Throughout Act IV the attainment of perfection is described as an abundance of waters which slake thirst in an ecstasy beyond satiety. The Chorus of Spirits describes the human mind as "an ocean/Of clear emotion" (1.96-97); Science bathes in "unsealed springs" (1.115); and the dance of creation is "As the waves of a thousand streams" (1.133). In the emblem of the Spirit of the Earth, Love is "one aëreal mass/ Which drowns the sense" (1.260-261). However, Shelley also states the other side of the paradox, that infinite thirst seems infinitely real. After the emblem of fulfilment, the Earth begins the celebration of his joy with the lyric "Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains" (1.332-355). This lyric in part parallels the strange horror of the emblem of the past evolutionary cycles. It is an extended inversion of the image of "one aëreal mass" drowning

the sense, and recalls the ruinous power of the perishing waters. Jupiter is referred to as threatening with "black destruction" and "sending/A solid cloud to rain hot thunderstones ... to one void mass battering and blinding" (1.340-343). This ironic parallel to the emblem of Love includes both the cloud and water imagery of Prometheus. Furthermore, in the final stanza, Jupiter is a "brackish cup", "drunk up by thirsty nothing", and a "void annihilation" paradoxically drowned in love. As it celebrates the fall of Jupiter, the lyric implies that Prometheus is a thirst of infinite desire and a void annihilation as well as an aëreal ocean of Love. This ambiguous pattern of imagery is continued in the Moon's long lyric in which she describes herself as a Maenad dancing round the cup of Agave (1.450-492). The Moon's repetition of these images immediately precedes the speeches of Panthea and Ione. Within this context, Panthea's description of herself as rising from a bath of water and light "among dark rocks" recalls the despair of desire and uncertainty as well as the joy of the triumph. Ione's comment, "Ah me! sweet sister, /The stream of sound has ebbed away from us" (1.505) is a clearer ambiguous reference to the uncertainty of inspiration (and the exclamation "Ah me!" is a probable reminder of the lament of Prometheus when suffering infinite desire).

The appearance of Demogorgon increases the ambiguous significance of the climax. As throughout the poem, Demogorgon parallels the Furies as well as Prometheus. As the present

vigil before the cave parallels the vigil before Jupiter's defeat, and as the present cave is linked with Demogorgon's cave, we should be well prepared for his dual significance. At first he is not named: he is a "darkness ... rising out of Earth" and a strange shower of dark light from the sky (l.510-516). Shelley stresses Demogorgon's similarity to the dark rain of Jupiter in the Earth's lyric, and to the Furies in Act I. Furthermore, Demogorgon is the culmination of a large number of images in Act IV which link Love and the idea that desire is infinite in a fathomless universe. The description of Demogorgon as a shower of dark light is connected with the emblems of the Earth and Moon. The eyes of the Moon are "heavens/ Of liquid darkness" (l.225-226) poured like dark sunlight into the surrounding air. This emblem combines the image of infinite desire drowned in fulfilment and the dark rays of Demogorgon's fathomless gloom. As the chariot carries (as well as the child) an "orblike canopy /Of gentle darkness" (l.210), it is a direct parallel to the original description of Demogorgon as an enthroned darkness radiating "rays of gloom" (cf. Act II Sc.IV l.1-6). The references to Demogorgon at this point also emphasise that the emblems of the Moon and Earth have the same basic significance. Their equivalence to Asia and Prometheus, and the similarity of the winged children and their chariots, seem sufficient to suggest the continuity of meaning. However, we might also remember that, when the first vision of Demogorgon appears, Panthea's eyes are described as "Ten thousand orbs

involving and involved ... Sphere within sphere" (Act II Sc.I. 1.241-243). The variation of the image of the wand of power is more obvious. The moonbeam and rays of dark light of the Moon emblem become rays of azure and golden fire in the Earth emblem. The paradox that Love must arise out of a fathomless abyss is implied in these images. The dark rays of the emblem of "gentle darkness" are "fire that is not brightness" (1.230); the second emblem is bright rays "Filling the abyss" (1.276). In both emblems the implication is that Love is Prometheus and Demogorgon. The paradox is repeated when, although the abyss is filled with light, it reveals the "sepulchred emblems" of ruin, "gray annihilation ... in the hard, black deep" (1.301), and monstrous beasts which are reminiscent of the Furies as well as Demogorgon. The abyss remains a "hard, black deep" even when pierced by Promethean love. (These images are also developed in the Earth's song about love, like light filling the "void annihilation"). In the same way, the third song of the Earth, "It interpenetrates my granite mass" (1.370-423), implies the dilemma that love is desire and uncertainty. The second stanza is an explicit comment upon the fathomless abyss and Demogorgon's cave. The Earth rejoices that love "has arisen/ Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being". Furthermore, "Thought's stagnant chaos" and hate, pain and fear are described as being "unremoved for ever". According to the paradox, light has appeared in the "lampless caves", so that imperfections are "light-vanquished shadows". (The images are also linked with the ambiguous significance of the cave of

Prometheus in Act III). Therefore, the climax of the lyric is not merely a cry of triumph:

"And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,

Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none"

(1.422-423).

The words echo Demogorgon's revelation in Act II Sc. IV (1.114-116). As Demogorgon has explained, the abyss cannot "vomit forth its secrets", the deep truth is unfathomable. In the lyrics which follow, this reminder is linked increasingly with the theme of infinite desire. Firstly, the whirling of the Earth and Moon illustrates joy's ecstasy. But it also implies an infinite duration for desire. It seems inadequate to assume that the image is a naive or unconscious rejection of the cessation of desire in Love, or that it shows the simple failure of apocalyptic humanism to imagine human progress. The subsidiary images also imply that the abyss is "unremoved for ever". The Earth's comment "I spin beneath my pyramid of night" (1.444) is a reminder of the abyss (as well as evidence of Shelley's scientific learning). It is followed by the explicit paradox that the Earth's attainment of love is like the "love dreams" of a youth. The Moon's final song elaborates the paradoxes that Love is desire and that fulfilment is never consummated. The Moon is "a most enamoured maiden" (1.467) and "an insatiate bride" (1.471). Demogorgon, therefore, seems a clear statement of the connection between desire and uncertainty.

Demogorgon also helps to state Shelley's sense of tragic

insanity. A number of animal images are linked with this level of meaning. Immediately before he appears the Earth praises the Moon because she has brought peace:

"Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need they balm" (1.501-502).

At one level, this is the climax of the extravagant praise of joy as frenzy. It is also linked with images which recall that Demogorgon is a savage animal and reflects the fact that Love is a monstrous dream which pursues man with the speed of a Fury. At the very beginning of Act IV, Promethean love is both the shepherd and the savage animal. The sun is a shepherd but the stars remind us that "fawns flee the leopard" (1.1-7). The Chorus of Spirits also stress that before the triumph "the hungry Hours were hounds /which chased the day like a bleeding deer" (1.73-74). (This imagery is also developed in the description of the past evolutionary cycles). As the image of monstrous pursuit is closely associated with Demogorgon, Asia and Panthea, the tiger image seems to be relevant to Demogorgon's appearance before Panthea and Ione. When Demogorgon rises from the earth and falls from the sky he is in part the monster Love when its victims are captured. The complete paradox at this point is linked with another echo in the imagery. Demogorgon is also reminiscent of Prometheus as a god who assumes strange disguises in his pursuit of love. Shelley stresses that Panthea and Ione have the kind of beauty the Greek gods desired. Panthea describes herself as a nymph arising from sparkling water, and Ione continues the

image with the reminder of "a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair" (1.509). As Demogorgon is a shower of dark rays we might also remember that Prometheus became a cloud and "the warm aether of the morning sun" in Panthea's dream in Act II Sc. I (and that the dream is also equivalent to Apollo and Hyacinth). However, it is far more important that the impression that Demogorgon is both a god in pursuit of love and a monstrous beast is evoked by the major image of the Moon's final song. The Moon describes herself in her orbit around the Earth as a Maenad:

"Like a Maenad, round the cup

Which Agave lifted up

In the weird Cadmean forest." (1.473-475).

Demogorgon and the nymphs should evoke reference to Orpheus and his destruction by the Maenads, the death of Actaeon (because the Moon is Artemis), the similar horrible death of Pentheus (torn apart by Agave), and the madness and horror of the Dionysian ecstasy of the Maenads. The Moon's song shows that Prometheus is the cup of Agave, symbolic of the worst madness and bestiality of the Dionysian cult.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Demogorgon shows that Prometheus is Orpheus, Dionysius and Apollo, the gods of prophecy, song and visionary inspiration. The imagery is contrived so that the climax of the celebration of joy is also the climax of the implications that prophecy is madness, monstrous desire and ruin.

The explicit reference to Agave and the Maenads at the end of Act IV stresses the importance of the Dionysian and Orphic

myths in Prometheus Unbound. There is further explicit evidence in Act IV: the Earth explains that in the new universe, "Language is a perpetual Orphic song" (1.415). The poem as a whole suggests the relevance of the full Orphic cycle and the frenzy of Dionysian inspiration. Asia's journey to Demogorgon parallels the journey of Orpheus to Hades. The consistent linking of Asia, the Maenads, Demogorgon and the Furies has been commented upon. The linking of the Furies and the Maenads is not an unusual poetic device; and a logical response to such figures as the Bassarids.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ Act IV stresses that Orpheus was destroyed by the Dionysian cult to which he belonged. Furthermore, at some time during 1819 or 1820 Shelley wrote an unfinished Orpheus which parallels much of the imagery of Prometheus Unbound.⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Shelley's enthusiasm for John Frank Newton's esoteric interpretations of the Orphic rites began as early as 1812. According to Ross G. Woodman, Newton interpreted the Mysteries as a myth of apocalyptic spiritual re-birth, centred upon the various incarnations of Dionysius, and proclaiming (in agreement with the Hindu Zodiac) Creation, Preservation, Destruction, Renovation.⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ Woodman claims the influence of Newton's Orphism upon the early poems (including The Revolt of Islam) and says that Asia's history of the universe (Act III Sc.IV) follows Newton. But he states the traditional argument that Shelley wrote about apocalyptic Platonism (his interpretation of Adonais is derived from Wasserman⁽¹⁷⁸⁾). Shelley's Greek imagery in Prometheus Unbound seems a more elaborate and equivocal version of the Dionysian

myths. Firstly, Prometheus is Apollo as well as Dionysius. Prometheus is a sun-god, he reflects Apollo's adventures, and his temple is Apollo's Delphic oracle. (Demogorgon's cave, the Spirit of the Earth and the Promethean temple suggest Shelley remembered that the divine vapour of the Delphic oracle ascended as a spirit from the centre of the Earth). It seems relevant that Apollo was "destroyer and healer", and (in contrast to Christ) wolf-god and shepherd, and that his battle with Python (a monster symbolic of the death of the fertility-god) was as important in his worship as his prophetic gifts.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Prometheus combines the Apollonian cycle, the vision and monstrous death of Orpheus, Actaeon and Pentheus, and the bestiality, madness and ecstasy of Dionysius.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ The parallels are suggested by minor images as well as the main structural outlines: in Act IV the beast and shepherd images of Apollo become the hound and hind images of Orpheus, Actaeon and Pentheus. The linking of Apollo and Dionysius, and the implicit reminders of the Greek cults, seem important for understanding Shelley's suggestions that prophetic inspiration is horrible madness and that tragic madness is Dionysian frenzy. They also demand a great deal more research. However, the Dionysian theme is also stated in less recondite images.

The comment upon Dionysian madness is prepared for throughout Act IV. The Spirits sing of the "storm of delight ... the panic of glee!" (1.44). The dance of creation, therefore, parallels the frenzied dance of the Moon. The references to madness become more clear in the songs of the Earth. The

first song begins: "The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!" (1.319). The laughter at the beginning of the second song - "Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains" (1.332) - implies more than ecstatic joy. The element of the grotesque seems contrived. With the image "a vast and inextinguishable laughter" which follows, it implies that infinite pain torments man with the demons of madness. The emblem of the Earth helps to explain this aspect of the songs. The Spirit of the Earth within the sphere smiles as it sleeps and Ione says: "'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony"(1.269). Firstly, this suggests the joy of the mystery of love. Secondly, it is a reminder of the images and speeches in Act III in which the Spirit of the Earth suggests a tragic dilemma. As the Earth's later song implies, when poetry is Orphic song, the message is harmony and the fact that harmony must arise in spite of chaos and insane lack of reason, "thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were" (1.417). The paradox is implied in the two short speeches which introduce the final Orphic hymn:

"Ione: There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

Panthea: An universal sound like words: Oh, list!"

(1.516-517).

The implication is that the "senseless and shapeless" form of language is as real as the nymphs' rapturous sense of oracular magnificence. In meaning and emotion the final hymn seems intended as a Dionysian equivalent to the apocalyptic lyricism

of the final scenes in Shakespearean tragedy.

Shelley's final crescendo of ambiguous lyricism is governed by his definition of reality as a realm of phantoms, dream and uncertainty, in which, although all contraries are true, the mind persists with ideals. Therefore, the eclipse and darkness of Demogorgon sing the final hymn. The idea that reality is a dream appears throughout Act IV. Ione and Panthea are discovered asleep; and Shelley elaborates numerous parallels between waking and sleeping, dream and vision, dawn and sunset. The Spirits sing:

"We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;

We have known the voice of Love in dreams" (1.64-65).

In the second emblem, the Spirit of the Earth is asleep and merely "talks of what he loves in dream" (1.268). At the climax of the Moon's song, "the sunset sleeps" and the final analogy for love and reality recalls the cloud and dream images of Act I and Act II:

"As a gray and watery mist

Glow like solid amethyst

Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,

When the sunset sleeps

Upon its snow - " (1.488-492).

In preparation for the final hymn, Shelley stresses that inspiration has the illusory insubstantiality of a dream. As throughout the poem, we should remember that the converse of Promethean inspiration is Pandora, the lovely plague: "She

had brought with her a jar, containing all manner of evils and diseases; this she opened, and they all flew out, leaving only Hope at the bottom⁽¹⁸¹⁾." At the end of the poem, Demogorgon praises Hope (which creates "From its own wreck the thing it contemplates") as the equivalent of Love, and first repeats the dilemma of wisdom and madness, balm and horror, flight and fall:

"Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings" (1.557-561).

(3)

Analysis of the continuity of the tradition of myth has tended to obscure the excellence of much recent interpretation of the visionary material in the poems. It also obscures the fact that some important recent criticism lacks enthusiastic commitment to apocalypse and avoids the worst excesses of the view that Shelley is a rather intellectual Ariel. C.E. Pulos's The Deep Truth is a major commentary upon Shelley: the explanation of Shelley's scepticism is based upon wide research and seemingly complete understanding of the philosophical tradition. The following comment shows Pulos's general understanding of Shelley's uncertainty:

"Shelley's sceptical theory of knowledge led him to conceive of Beauty as the unknown cause of a fleeting sense of ecstasy, or an aspect of reality supported only by faith.⁽¹⁸²⁾"

My comments about Hume's theory of cause and his version of Necessity have been borrowed for the most part from Pulos. (183)

But Pulos finally stresses that Shelley attained a tentative and conditional transcendentalism. (184) He misunderstands Shelley's general uncertainty and is unaware of his concern with anguished analysis of a dilemma about inspiration. Milton Wilson's Shelley's Later Poetry is the best recent commentary. Wilson acknowledges the explanation of Shelley's scepticism in The Deep Truth; and he is aware of the complexity of Shelley's Romantic wit. (185) He writes with clear understanding of the attitude to evil and the conflict between the actual and the ideal in the poems. My interpretations are at times similar to the interpretations in Shelley's Later Poetry. The similarities tend to arise in discussion of Shelley's attitude to evil and reform. (186) For example, Wilson describes the Furies as "formless horror at the bottom of the soul. (187)"

Much of Shelley's Later Poetry is more profound analysis of the conflict between reform, apocalypse and imperfection than I could write. But Wilson is similar to Kurtz and Grabo. He claims that the poems are essentially Platonic: that is, essentially dedicated to vision and apocalypse. (188) His interpretation of the Furies ends with the comment that, although Shelley had a theory about human potentiality for evil, he chose to think of evil as illusion and heroic idealism as reality. (184)

In the later poems, he finds despair combining realism about present imperfection and "exhaustion after the goddess. (190)"

He stresses Shelley's sense of glory and quotes Dylan Thomas to show that Shelley had a tentative vision of actual apocalypse.⁽¹⁹¹⁾ He also overrates the value of the rhetoric. Nevertheless, Shelley's Later Poetry is perhaps a more impressive analysis of visionary poetry than any of the earlier commentaries upon Shelley's poems.

PART V.

There seems to be no fundamental change in Shelley's themes in the poems written after Prometheus Unbound. At the end of Epipsychidion he chants:

"One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation." (1.586-587).

The paradoxes are clearer and the emotion more controlled than in many parts of Prometheus Unbound. However, he implies the same amalgam of the cycle of visionary ecstasy and the paradoxical hope and painful bewilderment of his general uncertainty. Shelley did not attain maturity as a poet, even within the limitations of his tradition. Prometheus Unbound contains uncontrolled diction, a confusing number of general aims, relatively undisciplined structure (including basic matters such as our uncertainty about how much Prometheus and Asia understand about their significance), and wild frenzy combined with a desire for heroic stoicism. Therefore, Shelley seems a minor poet. But his genius was extraordinary. The poems contain luxuriant images and complicated major structural

inventions: and they maintain a consistent level of abstract speculation and ambiguous reference to recondite learning. In content and structure, Prometheus Unbound deals with the basic problems of Romanticism. In this way, Shelley is certainly a prophet, and a major poet in the historical development of English poetry. By his own confession, the poems also show the ruinous nonsense which underlies the Romantic attitude to poetry and inspiration. Despite his insistence upon hope and heroic stoicism, Shelley's dilemma commits him to moral and spiritual inertia, and, at least a theoretical view of madness. However, in the major poems, Shelley's mind is brilliantly alive. In spite of his immaturity, his unstable techniques, and the frenzy of his bewilderment, he presents ambitious theories about man and the universe, and lyrical illustrations of his desire for perfection. Although it is very far from being a great religious poem, and finally offers the conflicting rituals of the fathomless uncertainty between disbelief and belief, Prometheus Unbound has some, relative value as a poem about religious experience.

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2. Yeats, W.B.: Essays p. 52.
3. Ibid p.142
4. Ibid. p. 193
5. Ibid p. 191
6. Ibid p. 142
7. Ibid p. 202
8. Ibid p. 202
9. Ibid p. 202
10. Ibid. p.149
11. Ibid p.149-152.
12. Ibid p.52; p.191-192
13. Ibid p.198
14. Ibid p. 199
15. Ibid p. 199-200
16. Ibid. p. 94
17. Ibid p. 90
18. Ibid p. 100 - 104
19. Ibid p. 96
20. Ibid p.102
21. Ibid p. 95
22. Ibid p. 97
23. Ibid p. 93

24. Ibid p. 105.
25. Ibid p. 80.
26. Ibid p. 81
27. Ibid. p. 86-92.
28. Ibid. p. 109
29. Ibid p. 112-114
30. Ibid
31. Ibid p. 115-116.
32. Yeats, W.B.: Autobiographies (Macmillan, London, 1955).
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33. Yeats, W.B.: A Vision (Macmillan, London, 1937) p. 25.
34. Hutchinson, T. (ed): The Complete Poetical Works of P.B. Shelley. p. 205.
35. Ibid. p. 206
36. Ibid p. 207
37. Ibid p. 207
38. Ibid. p. 206
39. Julian and Maddalo are the exceptions.
40. The Cloud provides a number of parallels to this section.
In some cases, it is helpful in overcoming the tenuity of
the images. The combining of bird and cloud images
occurs throughout The Cloud.
41. It parallels the imagery of The Cloud (stanza five).
42. The image of the footsteps of Love and the vision of
Desolation parallel The Moon image in The Cloud.

43. Read, H.: In Defence of Shelley and Other Essays.
(Heinemann, London, 1936) p.23.
44. Lewis, C.S.: "Shelley, Dryden and Mr. Eliot" (1939):
in Abrams, M.H.: English Romantic Poets
(O.U.P., U.S.A., 1960) p. 262-263.
45. Knight, G. Wilson: The Starlit Dome (Methuen, 1959 -
first published, O.U.P., 1941) p.240.
46. Lewis, C.S.: op.cit. p. 263.
47. Ibid. p.264
48. Read, H.: op.cit. p.83
49. Ibid p.84.
50. Ibid. p.74
51. Ibid p.36; p.40-48.
52. Ibid p.84.
53. Knight, G. Wilson.: op.cit. p.XIII
54. Ibid. p.185
55. Ibid p.XI-XII
56. Ibid. p.198
57. Ibid p.242-243.
58. Ibid p.248
59. Ibid p.250
60. Ibid.p.257
61. Knight, G.Wilson.: The Christian Renaissance (Macmillan,
Toronto, 1933). p.285
62. Ibid. p.349
63. Ibid p.331

64. Ibid p.310
65. Ibid p.21
66. Ibid p.316
67. Bodkin, Maud: Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (O.U.P. London
1951 (first published, 1934)) p.21
68. Ibid p.214-215
69. Ibid p.271
70. Ibid p.325
71. Ibid p.10; p.28; p.37; p.44
72. Ibid p.150
73. Ibid p.286-287
74. Ibid p. 174
75. Ibid p.268
76. Ibid p.68
77. Ibid p. 261
78. Ibid p.261
79. Ibid p. 252-256.
80. Ibid. p.254-255
81. Throughout the poem Shelley makes frequent use of
complicated versions of Greek myth. This is obvious in the
main story and characters. But Shelley's detailed use
of Greek myth tends to be overlooked. For example, in the
present scene, Prometheus as a cloud is reminiscent of
Zeus; we also seem expected to know that the story of
Apollo and Daphne was understood as an illustration of the
effect produced by the sun upon the dew (cf. Guerber, H.A.:
The Myths of Greece and Rome (Harrap, London, 194C) p.45);

later in the scene the reference to Apollo and Daphne is paralleled by the reference to Apollo and Hyacinthus; and at the end of the scene Echo appears.

82. Grabo, C.: Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1935) p. 118-130.
83. It is important that Shelley describes the Furies as a company of animal-hybrid monsters. In Act I, they are Geryon, (a three-headed beast), Chimaera (lion,goat and dragon), the Sphinx and Gorgon. Furthermore, these were all defeated by heroes: Geryon by Hercules; Chimaera by Belerophon; the Sphinx by Oedipus; and Gorgon by Perseus. (cf. Rose, H.J.: A Handbook of Greek Mythology (Methuen, London, 1928) p.31).
84. cf. Act III Sc. V l.98-110.
85. Shelley rewrites the Hebrew myth in terms of the Greek myth of Chaos, the battles of the gods, and, of course, the rebellion of Prometheus (cf. Rose, H.J.: op.cit. p.19; p.53-57).
86. cf. Woodman, R.G.: op.cit.
87. Grabo, C.: Shelley's Eccentricities (The University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1950).
88. Ibid. p.57
89. Ibid p.49
90. Ibid p.53
91. Ibid. p.80-84.

92. The love of the Earth and Moon in Act IV is love between brother and sister, (cf. Act III Sc. IV. 1.86). Shelley's justification would be that Prometheus and Asia, as Apollo and Artemis, are brother and sister (cf. Rose, H.J.: op.cit. p.114). As Asia is the mother of the Spirit of the Earth (Act III Sc. IV. 1.24), Shelley perhaps intended us to remember that Asia in Greek myth is sometimes the mother of Prometheus instead of his wife (cf. Rose, H.J.: op.cit. p.56).
 93. Hutchinson, T.(ed.): The Complete Poetical Works of P.B. Shelley p.424-430.
 94. Praz, M.: The Romantic Agony (O.U.P., London, 1933).
 95. Ibid p.VI
 96. Ibid p.XII
 97. Ibid. p.26-28
 98. Kurtz, B.: The Pursuit of Death (O.U.P., New York, 1933) p. X -XI.
 99. Ibid.p.278; p.101-104; p.106.
 100. Ibid. p.XXII
 101. Grabo, G.: A Newton Among Poets (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1930). In code below: N.A.P.
- Grabo, C.: Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1935). In code below: P.U.

Grabo, C: The Magic Plant (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1936). In code below: M.P.

- 102. Grabo, C.: N.A.P. p.VIII
- 103. Grabo, C.: P.H. p.V
- 104. Grabo, C.: M.P. p.433; p.427.
- 105. Kurtz, B.: op.cit. p.80-81; p.101-102.
- 106. Ibid. p.166
- 107. cf. Ibid p.172: "In some deep sense (etc)."
- 108. Ibid. p.308
- 109. Ibid. p.290
- 110. Ibid p.308
- 111. Ibid p.181
- 112. Ibid p.176
- 113. Harold Bloom rejects it (cf. Bloom, H.: op.cit. p.140).

Carlos Baker wisely rejects the claim that Shelley was a scientific genius. But he relegates Grabo to an appendix where, although he allows the presence of scientific imagery, he avoids the problem by discussion of "scientific allegories (cf. Baker, C.: Shelley's Major Poetry (Russell and Russell, New York, 1961) p.285-287). However, the attitude seems to be changing. Desmond King-Hele, another major scholar -critic makes much of the scientific references; but he avoids a final comment upon the coherence of Shelley's theories; and his critical standards are vague (cf. King-Hele, D.: Shelley: His

- Thought and Work (Macmillan, London, 1962) p.155-168; p.177-178; p.203-209). Milton Wilson, in his excellent study, accepts the general truth of Grabo's theories (cf. Wilson, M.: Shelley's Later Poetry (Columbia University Press, New York, 1959) p.133; p.211).
114. Grabo, C.: N.A.P. p.12
 115. Ibid. p. 30
 116. Ibid. p.86.
 117. Ibid. p.60
 118. cf. Ibid p.87; p.101; p.105-108.
 119. The question is the extent of Shelley's reading in contemporary scientific journals.
 120. Grabo, C.: N.A.P. p.33; p.40; p.53; p.61
 121. Ibid. p.37; p.44; p.59; p.177; p.121-126; p.134; p.150-151; p.165; p.190.
 122. Ibid p.133; p.195-200.
 123. Grabo, C.: P.U. p.175
 124. Ibid. p.195
 125. Ibid.p.197-198.
 126. Grabo, C.: M.P. p.277; p.432-433.
 127. Ibid. p.435
 128. Ibid p.427
 129. Ibid p.432-438.
 130. A number of vague literary echoes add a further ironic undercurrent to the scene. The present line ("Where we will sit and ...") echoes Marlowe's lightly ironic call to pastoral happiness "There will we sit And"

(The Passionate Shepherd to his Love). The cave, Prometheus, the Oceanides, the Spirit of the Hour, and the echoes of the monster images from the previous pastoral idyll (Act III Sc.II) seem reminiscent of the cave of Prospero, Miranda, Ariel and Caliban. (And, although it seems unlikely to be intentional, the pastoral setting and the phrasing make the comment "A simple dwelling, which shall be our own "reminiscent of the Arden forest and Touchstone's description of Audrey: "A poor virgin, sir, an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own." The parallel, whether conscious or not, seems further evidence of Shelley's ironic attitude to the pastoral convention). Other Shakespearean echoes are referred to in the text.

- 131. Grabo, C: P.U. p.119
- 132. Ibid. p.119.
- 133. cf. King-Hele, D.: op.cit p.186.
- 134. Wilson, M.: op.cit. p.206
- 135. Ibid. p.217
- 136. Ibid. p.217.
- 137. For example, Wilson, M.: op.cit. p.88
- 138. Furthermore, although his final interpretation is wrong, Milton Wilson deals thoroughly with evil in The Cenci (cf. Wilson, M.: op.cit. p.79-90). He also links The Cenci and the Furies' temptations (Ibid p.74). However, he misunderstands Shelley's sense of evil and says that

Shelley believed "to be convinced of natural depravity may be simply a particularly emphatic form of self-love"; and he stresses Shelley's desire for "confident action" (Ibid p.91). He does not realise either that Shelley found horror in Prometheus, or that he was uncertain about inspiration. (For further discussion cf. Part V,(3) below).

139. cf. Act III Sc. III l.25-33; Hamlet Act IV Sc.VII, "There is a willow etc."
140. Pottle, F.A.: "The Case of Shelley" (in Abrams, M.H.(ed): English Romantic Poets (O.U.P., U.S.A., 1960).
141. Ibid p.290
142. Ibid p.295
143. Ibid p. 301
144. The work of Winters and Wimsatt referred to above seems sufficient evidence. Since the early 1950's there have been many major studies concerned with Romanticism. For example: Abrams, M.H.: The Mirror and the Lamp (O.U.P., New York, 1953).
Tindall, W. York: The Literary Symbol (Columbia University Press, U.S.A., 1955).
Frye, Northrop: Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton University Press, U.S.A., 1957).
145. Pottle, F.A. op.cit. p.305
146. Wasserman, E.: op.cit. p. 8.
147. Ibid p. 8 - 10.

148. Ibid p.12
149. Ibid. p. 201-205; p.224-226; p.237-239.
150. For a similar essay on Adonais cf. Wasserman, E.: "Adonais: Progressive Revelation as a Poetic Mode" (English Literary History, XXI (1954), p.274-326).
151. Kermode, F.: Puzzles and Epiphanies (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1962) p.69.
152. Wimsatt, W.K., and Brooks, C.: Literary Criticism: A Short History (Knopf, New York, 1957) p.709-711.
153. Frye, N.: op.cit. p.3-29.
154. Ibid. p.92-93
155. Ibid. p.90; p.211-272.
156. Ibid p.119
157. Ibid p.119
158. Ibid p.121
159. Anatomy of Criticism owes a great deal to Blake (cf. preface).
160. Bloom, H.: op.cit.(preface).
161. Ibid. p.3
162. Ibid. p.8
163. Ibid. p.3-4
164. Ibid. p.9-10.
165. Ibid p.141
166. Ibid p.207
167. Ibid p.219
168. Ibid.p.215. On Buber and mysticism, cf. Brasch, R.: The Star of David (A. and R., Sydney, 1955).

169. Ibid p.213
170. Ibid. p.112
171. Ibid. p.127
172. Ibid p.138
173. Ibid p.140
174. For the earlier images which link Promethean inspiration and the cup of Agave, cf: Act I, 1.474; 1.540-545; 1.573-576; 1.810-813. Act II Sc. III 1.1-10. Act III Sc.I 1.25-33. Act III Sc. III 1.110-147.
cf. also: Rose, H.J.: op.cit. p.152
175. Picard, B.L. (ed.): The Encyclopaedia of Myths and Legends (Edmund Ward, London, 1962) p.90.
Rose, H.J.: op.cit. p.154
176. cf. Orpheus: the cave and poisonous oracular vapour, 1.19-25; Orpheus, Maenad, Actaeon, 1.45-55; inspiration as Spring and water (1.60-66). However, it is not clear how much is the work of W.M. Rossetti.
177. Woodman, R.G.: op.cit.
178. Ibid. p.508-510. The other standard references are even less helpful: cf. White, Newman Ivy: Shelley(Secker and Warburg, London, 1947). Volume I. p.202-203.
Bush, D.: Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (Harvard Univ. Press. Massachusetts, 1937) p.129-168.
179. Rose, H.J.: op.cit. p.134-137.
180. Ibid. p.88; p.95; p.150-155; p.254.
181. Ibid. p.85

182. Pulos, C.E.: op.cit p.88
183. cf. p.16-19 above.
184. Pulos, C.E.: op.cit. p.107; p.112.
185. Wilson, M.: op.cit. p.49; p.104-117.
186. Wilson's interpretation of The Cenci has been referred to above. He also comments upon the parallel between Zoroaster and Prometheus (Ibid. p.64), that the Furies tempt with truth (Ibid p.100), that Panthea's second dream is Demogorgon Ibid p.131).
187. Ibid p.85
188. Ibid. p.253
189. Ibid p.85-100. For further relevant differences in interpretation, cf. Ibid p.129-132; p.138-144; p.218-223; p.272.
190. Ibid. p.201
191. Ibid. p.295; p.253-255.

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